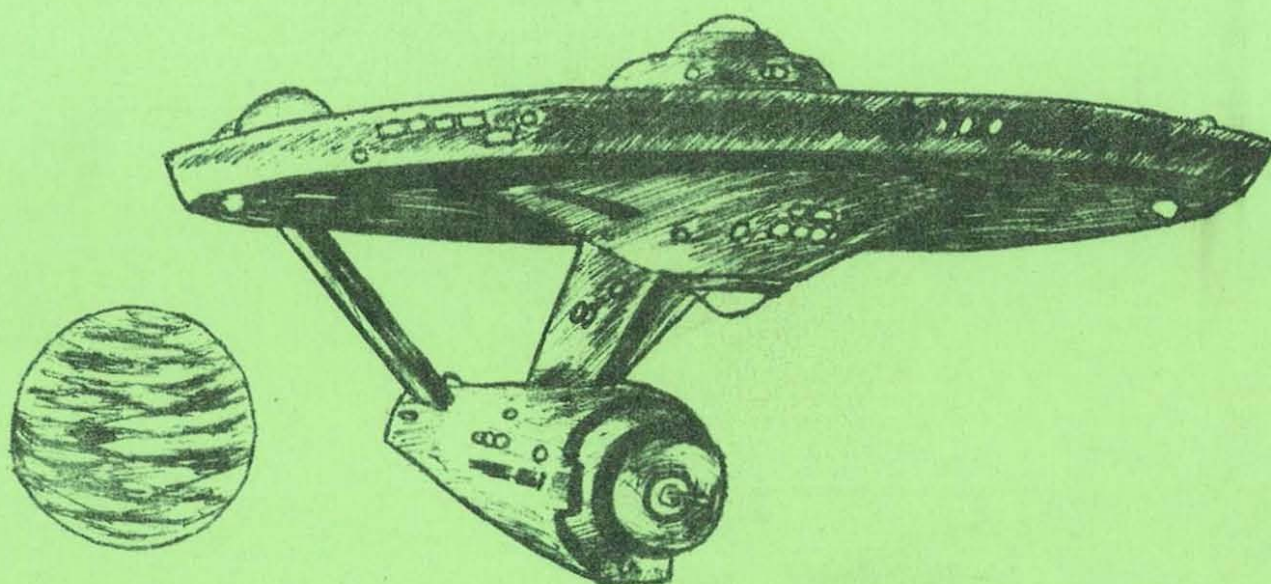


Scotpress

# ENTERPRISE -



## PERSONAL LOG 1

a STAR TREK  
fanzine

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Scotpress - Sheila Clark, Valerie Piacentini, Janet Quarton.

Hello everyone, and welcome to the first issue of our new zine.

As you'll know from our advertising, we intend Personal Log to be a zine containing, among general stories, stories of a more controversial nature. We are looking in particular for stories that examine some moral issue (as is done in No Other Choice in this issue). We don't want anything that would require the zine to be age-rated; rather we want stories that will make you think. Implicit sex is all right provided it is necessary for the development of the story; but we don't want anything that is just a rewrite of the author's own sex fantasies - sorry, Mary Sue, but we don't find you interesting, and your exploits don't tell us much about the characters either. I've said all this before, of course, but we do want our readers to know what they can expect from us, and from Personal Log.

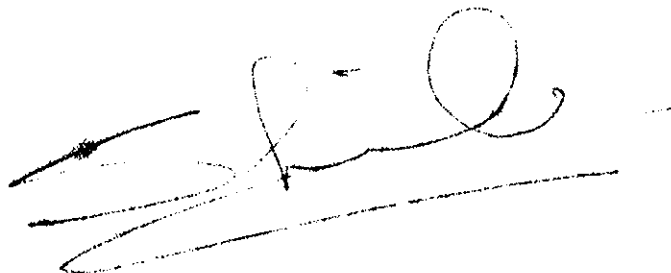
This issue is only very marginally what we want; we had to use the material that we had (obviously), but it does give an idea of the sort of mix we'd like to have in the zine. One or two general stories, one or two that discuss a controversial issue, perhaps an episode extension and something funny; and of course poems that also have the same sort of range.

The next issue of Personal Log will come out when we get the material for it; we do expect it to be less frequent in appearance than our main genzine, although we won't be printing an issue of it until August. Thereafter, we hope to have one issue of that zine every two months, though that of course depends on our getting submissions.

The success of ScoTpress is very much in the hands of the writers among you. I have enough stories submitted already to keep us going for all of 1981; which looks promising for the future. However, I'd be happier if I had more. The more stories we get in, the more zines we can put out, remember.

Enjoy the zine!

February 1981



PERSONAL LOG: by Ann Preece

How time flies! Two and a half years have passed since the end of the five-year mission, and this is the first time that I've felt the need to dictate an entry into my personal log. Until now there has been nothing of importance which I've wanted to say - well, let's face it, life as a desk-bound Admiral doesn't offer much in the way of excitement or adventure - being hounded by beaurocrats and swamped with mountains of paperwork can become very tedious and humdrum after a while. But so much has happened over the last few days that I felt I must put my thoughts on tape - perhaps this will be the last time I use this log - who knows?

The official account of our encounter with V'ger has already been sent to Starfleet Headquarters, so I'm not going to dwell on that now. This log is for my own use - for my own observations, thoughts, feelings. They are of interest only to me, not to anyone else. Well, perhaps that's not entirely true - they may be of interest to one person, but then, I think he knows already how I feel.

As long as I live, I will never forget that first sight of the Enterprise - my Enterprise - newly designed and refitted, it's true, but nevertheless she was still my girl! Even now I can't analyse my feelings - how my heart felt as though it would burst with pride; how my eyes pricked with unshed tears; the tightness in my throat caused by a lump which no amount of swallowing could remove. I couldn't speak, even had I the words to say - thank goodness for Scotty; he, at least, knew how I felt. To be back in space after so long - was it really only two and a half years? It had seemed a lifetime! I knew then that I had done the right thing when I'd fought Nogura for the command of my ship.

And the crew: the warmth of their welcome made me feel as though I had really come 'home' - Uhura, Sulu, Chekov - old friends, familiar faces. After two and a half years we were re-united once more; we were together as we had always been, as I knew we would be again. And McCoy - dear Bones - as stubborn and as argumentative as always, yet I knew that beneath that crusty exterior and that sardonic wit, he was secretly pleased to be back aboard the Enterprise.

Everything felt the same. Despite the changes, I felt as I had always felt as I took the command chair. And yet...something was different. Someone was missing. The one person whom I could always rely upon to be there; the one person who had never failed me in all the years we'd been together was strangely absent. Spock...my Vulcan friend...you weren't there - and that hurt, as I knew it would. I had grown so used to you always being there, at my side, so loyal, so calm, so supportive, that the bridge felt strange without your quiet presence.

Oh, don't get me wrong, Will Decker was an excellent young man - he would have made a fine Captain if - But he could never fill your place as Science Officer. Several times I felt my eyes straying to the science station; how strange to see someone else at your post!

Yet, underneath, I never doubted my 'feeling' that you would return. We had shared so many dangers in the past - I couldn't believe that you would let me face this new danger alone. And you proved me right, didn't you?

For over two years I hadn't heard from you, although I knew you'd returned to Vulcan. What happened to you there, I wonder. Oh, I won't ask - if you want me to know, you'll tell me, in your own good time; you know I won't pry. But something must have happened to send you back. Whatever it was, I shall be eternally grateful. The bond between us is strong, Spock, too strong to be broken by distance or passage of time. I think we both know that now, don't we?

But when you finally came on board - how changed you were. It was such a shock to see you standing there, so cold, so formal, so distant, so - Vulcan. I could feel my emotions surging to the surface - I knew that all I was feeling was showing on my face: surprise, happiness, warmth, love - and then pain, puzzlement. You had changed so much. I wanted to throw my arms around you and hug you, yet I knew I mustn't. For now, you were the cool and logical Science

Officer; the highly efficient and formal First Officer. Gone was the Spock I knew existed beneath that cold exterior; gone was the warmth I knew you once possessed.

Yet I knew that eventually all would be as it had always been. You needed time - I can see that now - and I'm glad I didn't hurry you. Those moments in Sickbay when you reached out your hand and gripped mine - I could see the acceptance in your eyes, on your face - at last you had accepted yourself, your emotions ...as you have always accepted mine.

The past is behind us now, Spock. Explanations, recriminations - they are unnecessary. At last we can look ahead to a new future. Everything is as it should be - we are together - we have both come home.

+++++

CHRISTINE - FOR LOVE OF A VULCAN by Ann Smith

I am aware of the glances,  
The pity in their smiles,  
They think I'm a fool,  
To try my womanly wiles  
On a Vulcan.

I am trapped...by my own heart,  
Love came unbidden;  
I can no more change than he.

It is foolish...yet I am not fooled,  
I know there is no hope  
That he could love me.

I will always love him,  
Find balm in the knowledge...he is near.  
My body will never know his touch,  
Yet he is gentle with me.

He has seen my heart,  
Read the knowledge in my eyes,  
(Perhaps in some small way it has moved him),  
He has tried to understand.

I have cursed him for his aloofness,  
I have craved his touch,  
I have seen where his heart lies,  
And I have hated in anger.

Reason tells me the truth,  
And my mind accepts it;  
It is my errant heart which will not be stilled.

For his understanding...gentleness...

I damn him.

For my love.....

I damn myself.

+++++

UHURA: I'm writing my life story.

CHRISTINE CHAPEL: How far have you got?

UHURA: Chap 5.

+++++

MADNESS OF THE MIND by Lorraine Goodison

Lime played on lilac, yellow on crimson, darting wildly through an unending shimmering curtain of gold. Where the dazzling colours met and melded into one impossible hue, undulating mountains rolled in a procession from the horizon, their surfaces blasted smooth by the tearing winds which had lately begun to blow across the deserted world.

At the mountain range's feet a great city built of chocolate-coloured stone and emerald crystals spread for many miles, its boundaries merging with the surrounding vegetation so easily the defining lines were lost in nature's tangle. Within the settlement cosy homes nestled between striking crystal formations and landscaped gardens set aside for private meditation and solitude.

Yet the city was not alien to those who dwelled there, and to the young girl walking its silent pathways it would always be her only home. She moved slowly, drinking in every aspect of her surroundings. Every crack, every plant encroaching where once it would have been gently removed to another place, every blank, unseeing window was stored in her memory. She murmured its ancient name, invoking memories of happier times when this land pulsed with life and a sense of wonder at every turn. The enchantment was still there, but the remembrance of her race's fate stained the brightness and to her, the city's heart was gone.

Wind whipped cruelly through a sculpture, buffeting her fiery hair, tugging at her clothes. Slowly she moved to a more sheltered spot, her eyes looking upwards to the moving kaleidoscope that was the sky. Such brilliance, she knew, had not been seen since the Beginning, and perhaps it was fitting that it should return once more before her world died.

Tears entered the girl's eyes. Soon, soon the last child of Tallowyar would die also; then all hope would be gone. Reluctantly she retraced her steps to what was once her home and studied it one last time. Grief threatened to overcome her again, but she pushed it away, trying to prepare herself for the coming moment.

Ah, feel the grief of a planet!

Feel the grief of Tallowyar...

Such words were all she could find as her farewell, but perhaps they would suffice. No one would hear them, after all. The wind gusted strongly, unheeding of the slight figure waiting motionless by the silver fountain. The girl breathed deeply, turning her senses inward so that she might lose all ties with reality and thus let go in peace and tranquillity.

I will die alone, as none of my people ever have... I have no choice, however.

From far away came the faint toll of a bell brushed by wind. It was caught up in the rushing air, but another, louder sound emerged and refused to be blown away. It grew louder, nearer. The girl tried to ignore it, but could not. Caught by indecision she wavered, finally returning long enough to recognise the sound for what it was. Hope flared in her like an unquenched flame, obliterating all other thoughts. Wondrous Tallowyar, you did not leave me alone after all!

She left the garden swiftly, breaking into a frantic run born of panic and fear that her ears had lied...

+ + + + +

"...Run...got to...to get away...too powerful, can't fight...What is... please, no! I can't...must escape. I must escape..."

Sweat ran in rivulets from the tossing, feverish patient, soaking his bed covers and pillow as soon as they were changed. His head whipped back and forth, his hands nervously gripping the covers as if they were his only lifeline. His eyes tightly shut, he lay totally unaware of his surroundings,



trapped as he was in a whirlpool of nightmarish dreams. A gruff concerned voice spoke, then something was firmly pressed to his shoulder. A faint sobbing gasp left his lips before his raving quietened to a mumble even Spock's ears found hard to pick out.

McCoy glanced toward his companions, his mind still on his patient's condition. "That'll keep him calm for the moment, give the drugs a chance to work. Any ideas about his identity yet, Jim?"

The Enterprise captain sighed, folded his arms. "Very little, but Uhura found out his name, for what it's worth. Ahanu Whitewing. Born in North America of American Indian parents, aged 32. Left Earth four years ago intending to found a colony based on the traditional life of his ancestors. There's been no news of him since then, but Uhura is still checking."

"Any medical history in that lot?"

"Not yet, but she'll find it if it's there. You shouldn't have to wait too long."

McCoy shrugged philosophically. "Well, I guess it doesn't matter too much anyway. From the tests we've run so far and general observation, I'd say he is either totally insane or so close to it anything could push him over the edge."

At that moment the mystery man's eyes snapped open, causing McCoy to check the diagnostic panel hurriedly. Full lips curled back over strong white teeth as he spoke defiantly to something none of them could see.

"I know you're there, demon! I can feel you still, but you can't hide from me. Get out! Get out!"

He struggled wildly against the straps, but Kirk and Spock held him steady until McCoy could inject him with another sedative. The doctor looked worriedly at his hypo. "That stuff should have kept him out for a good three hours. No one's ever shrugged it off before."

"Perhaps your potions are losing their potency, Doctor," Spock suggested smoothly.

McCoy glared murderously at the Vulcan, but for once was stuck for an answer. Kirk interrupted before full-scale war broke out for the umpteenth time.

"Bones, he was completely irrational when he was found, wasn't he?"

"Spock's the one who found him," McCoy answered sourly. "Ask him."

Kirk repressed a sigh and the candid remark that McCoy was bound to have read the landing party's report anyway. He looked enquiringly at Spock, and the Vulcan patiently obliged.

"When we first saw him in the city, he ran to us, apparently extremely overwrought and almost frantic in his desire to leave," he explained. "He acted as if he was terrified of something and pleaded to be allowed to accompany us. However, when we had calmed him somewhat and began to return to base, his mood changed dramatically."

"In what way exactly?" asked McCoy, staring moddily at Ahanu. "Was it sudden, or slower, after a few minutes, maybe?"

"In seconds, Doctor," Spock said firmly. "He halted in mid-sentence and began shouting that he wished to remain. He gave the impression that he would rather die than go with us. Of course, we could not leave him with the planet in the stages of dying. Already it is breaking up."

"Yes, a shame really," remarked Kirk. "By all accounts, it was beautiful."

"Indeed, I wish we had had more time to study it properly," Spock said, almost wistfully. "The city we found was magnificent, showing all the signs of antique civilisation. However, what is puzzling is the fact that the planet should have continued to live for another two billion years, if the scans are correct."

"Yeah, well we can't all confirm to statistics just to suit you, Spock," McCoy said drily. "Now if you gentlemen don't mind, I have a ward to run."

"Then we're going, before you whip us into bed with some so-called ailment," grinned Kirk. "Let me know more about our patient, will you?"

"I'll consider it. Now get from under my feet and stop tripping me up, both of you!"

Spock opened his mouth to point out the incongruity of the doctor's statement, then thought better of it as he considered the glint in McCoy's eye. There was a Human saying - better safe than sorry... Spock thought he would be better to follow its advice - this time.

As the Enterprise sped through the black reaches of space on her latest mission - transporting supplies to a remote colony - McCoy began to build up a file on Ahanu Whitewing. He remained as puzzled as ever.

It would take several months of therapy to discover what had made the man's mind snap, and only then could the healing process begin in earnest. Meanwhile all he could do was collect information from the many tests and pass it on when they eventually dropped Ahanu off at the next starbase hospital.

The fever had broken, and at times the Indian seemed quite lucid, calmly answering the seeking questions McCoy put to him at such times. However, he spoke little of his past, and as McCoy had expected, he found out little. On the third day Ahanu relapsed into babbling fits, reacting violently when anyone came within a few feet of him.

After one such period he lay dozing, restraining straps tied firmly across him just in case. McCoy checked them carefully as he passed. He did not relish the idea of chasing the Indian down the corridor again if he could help it. He picked up the case notes, eyeing them moodily. All those tests and what good had they done? He was still no nearer to any answers. True, he could not devote his whole attention to the patient as he would have wished, but he still felt annoyingly stupid. He mumbled grumpily to himself, unaware that Ahanu was awake and watching his every move.

The Indian's eyes darkened imperceptibly. After a while he spoke quietly. "I am not insane, Dr. McCoy. There is no need to keep me here, and never will be. I am in perfect health. There is no need to keep me here."

A wide smile curved McCoy's lips as he stopped in mid-stride, returning to Ahanu's bed.

"You know," he said jovially, "I really can't see any reason for you to remain in Sickbay..."

A thin smile touched Ahanu's lips when McCoy loosened the straps and hurried away to find suitable clothing. The Indian pulled them on slowly, fighting the churning nausea in his stomach. McCoy stood at one side as he dressed, then quite happily said goodbye to his insane patient as he walked confidently out the door.

Kirk stepped from the turbolift, looked sideways, and blinked at the sight of a certified mental patient walking alone out with the confines of Sickbay. He walked swiftly up to Ahanu, wary of a possible violent reaction.

"Ahanu Whitewing? How did you - Does Dr. McCoy know you are out of Sickbay?"

The expression was one of serene confidence. "Why, of course, Captain. He discharged me only minutes ago and pronounced me fit. He said I could go. Is anything wrong?"

Kirk glanced towards the Sickbay door. He released his grip on Ahanu's arm, confused by the man's ready, sensible explanation. He could be lying, of course, but he, Kirk, could not very well haul him back to Sickbay if Bones had discharged him. After all, who was the doctor around here?



He left the Indian politely, curious to discover from McCoy what had brought about this miraculous recovery. He found the doctor in his office, staring absent-mindedly at a list of new drugs.

Kirk opened the conversation, wondering how to put the enquiry tactfully. He was not often given to questioning McCoy's medical judgement - at least, not about other people.

"Bones, I just met Ahanu Whitewing out in the corridor."

McCoy nodded placidly. "That figures - he just left."

Kirk's ears pricked at the dreamy tone in his friend's voice. "But you certified him insane," he persisted. "I remember you telling me he couldn't be left alone in case he had another relapse. Why the sudden change of heart?"

McCoy's face darkened. "I was wrong, that's all. I have yet to meet a saner man, and that includes you. Are you questioning my judgement, Captain?"

The nagging worry grew at the forceful use of his rank rather than his first name. McCoy looked as if he was spoiling for an argument, which Kirk honestly did not wish at that moment. He tried to lighten the mood by shrugging lightly and smiling.

"Of course not, Bones. I was just curious since you were so sure before. Forget it..."

"I intend to!"

Taken aback by the snapped, brusque reply, Kirk left in a state of hurt confusion, unable to account for McCoy's abruptness. The doctor watched him go and returned to his thought-bereft daydream.

Ahanu pressed his forehead against the cool metal wall, angry at the sickness still lingering in his body. He could not afford to give in to it, yet it drained what little strength he had. Giddiness spun his senses like a top and he was only just aware of toppling over as someone approached from the opposite direction.

Strong hands quickly caught him before he hit the floor, steadying him against the hard wall until his head slowed its spinning. After a short while he could again open his eyes and cursed his luck when he saw it was Spock, the half-breed who had taken him from the planet. He pulled himself together, pushing himself away from Spock as if he were perfectly all right.

"Are you - " began Spock in concern.

"I am well now," Ahanu answered steadily. "And before you ask, Dr. McCoy himself discharged me with a clean bill of health. It was a dizzy spell, nothing more. I get them occasionally."

Since Spock had last seen Ahanu in the throes of madness, one eyebrow quirked a little at this lucid, normal explanation. He did not profess to understand medicine, especially McCoy's brand, but immediate recovery from insanity within a matter of days was not, he felt, possible. McCoy had mentioned periods of near normality...could this be one such time?

Ahanu picked up the thought, smoothly countering it before the Vulcan considered it much further. "If you are unsure, please ask the doctor yourself. My apparent insanity was due to something on the planet which affected me - or so he says. All I know is that I'm well again, thanks to him."

A little of the doubt left Spock's expression, but not all. No matter, thought Ahanu. It will do. He turned to leave, swaying slightly as he left the wall's firm support.

Spock instinctively caught one arm, then let go instantly, a look of complete and utter surprise crossing his face. In a matter of a few seconds his mind had sensed another, perhaps greater, telepathic mind before rigid barriers clattered

down to protect it, leaving the normal undisciplined thoughts of the average Human.

Ahanu quickly hurried away, berating himself for that small but fatal slip. He might have been able to shield himself against Spock indefinitely, but now the Vulcan knew, he would probe until he found out the truth. Ahanu could not afford that; there was too much to think about and plan. Should the madness grow in strength he would be too tired to scheme and fend off Spock's curiosity at the same time. The Vulcan would not give him the time he needed, and the madness must be dealt with. It had to be kept unaware of his intentions until it was too late for escape. He stopped, looking back the way he had come. Yes, the end must be planned carefully, and that meant Spock must be got rid of before he could continue in safety.

The presence of another startled him from his brooding. He looked up to see a young ensign watching him curiously, trying to decide if he was an honoured guest or just a temporary passenger. Either way, the ensign decided, he was heading for a restricted area.

"Sir," he began politely, "I'm afraid you can't come in here. It is off-limits to - awwwk!"

The sentence ended in a strangling choke as Ahanu struck him down without lifting a finger. Within seconds a lifeless body lay sprawled at his feet, silent testimony to his powers.

"Garbage," muttered the Indian vehemently before stepping over the body and walking calmly away.

Kirk stared moodily at his empty coffee cup, unwilling to move from his seat. His eyes wandered over towards a corner table where McCoy sat, alone and prickly unapproachable. Since their small exchange, the doctor had pointedly ignored Kirk, speaking to him only when absolutely necessary. Kirk was saddened and puzzled by his friend's actions - Bones had never held a grudge like this before, and never about such a petty thing. He tried to fathom out what he'd said that had angered McCoy so much, and failed to find a reasonable answer.

The sound of raised voices broke his thoughts for a moment, but the disagreement was quickly quelled, the culprits separating by mutual agreement. Practically everyone is irritable, thought Kirk. We're all slightly cantankerous with this latest set of missions... Some missions, running to and fro with paltry errands any cargo ship could do. There are always boring periods, I suppose, but any more inaction will drive the crew mad...

"May I join you, Captain?"

He found himself looking up into fathomless black eyes laced with lines of fatigue. Pushing his gloom aside, he gestured to the opposite seat. "Yes, of course, Mr. Whitewing. Please be seated."

"Thank you." The Indian sank slowly into the chair, lightly and easily sifting Kirk's surface thoughts as he did so. There was no sign of the Vulcan's having told him of yesterday's incident. Good. It would make Kirk less wary. He feigned a friendliness he did not feel. "Captain, please call me by my first name, Ahanu. I prefer it to any other."

"Certainly," Kirk murmured politely. "Ahanu... I guess that's old American Indian?"

He nodded gravely. "It is. In the old tongue it means - one who laughs... I have not laughed in a long time. Perhaps I should change it."

There was a strained silence, leaving Kirk unsure what to say next. His gaze roamed idly from the table, finally resting on Spock, who had just entered the room. The Captain restrained a sigh of relief. There was someone who could help the conversation flow a little easier. Perhaps it was only the peculiarities

of Ahanu's presence on the ship, but he felt vaguely uneasy about the Indian, almost fearful. He called Spock across.

Ahanu did not heed the Vulcan's arrival, for he had problems of his own. He drew a sharp breath, fighting back the panic created by the movement of that which was in him. Savagely he forced it back, anxious that Spock should not detect it as before. He rose abruptly, effectively cutting Kirk off in mid-sentence. Without a word of explanation, the Indian fled from the crowded mess.

Captain and First Officer stared after him in astonishment. "Well... wonder what was wrong there," Kirk finally said.

"I think he did not wish to meet me again," remarked Spock as he sat in the vacated seat. Seeing Kirk's enquiring look, he recounted his previous encounter with Ahanu and the impression of telepathy he had received.

"You think he's hiding his abilities for some reason?" Kirk said.

"It would seem the best explanation. As to why...we can only assume some ulterior motive as yet unrevealed."

"I don't like mystery men on my ship," Kirk stated emphatically. "Look, have you mentioned this to Bones?"

"I tried, but he is singularly unpleasant company at the moment, and unwilling to discuss anything he feels comes under his sole jurisdiction," said Spock, neglecting to mention the profanity-laced tirade he had received as soon as he set foot in McCoy's domain.

Kirk knew by the blunt statement that there was more to it than that, and the concern grew a little more. Bones never held grudges without good reason, and as far as he could see, all they had done was ask about a patient. Spock, it seemed, hadn't even got that far. His mouth straightened into a stubborn line. If they had trodden on McCoy's toes then the least he could do was say what was rubbing him up the wrong way. Either way, the air would have to be cleared soon - animosity between the commanding officers was not good for the ship, and people were already commenting on it.

McCoy had left the mess earlier, so, his mind made up, Kirk excused himself and left for Sickbay. Spock watched him go, concern written clearly in his eyes. He disliked the infrequent times his two friends argued and hoped they would be able to settle their differences this time. Meanwhile, he decided, he would search over Ahanu's records again. Perhaps there was something Uhura had missed, however slight.

Kirk had set out at a fast, determined pace, his mind mulling over McCoy's sudden animosity. It really wasn't good enough, this resentment over nothing. He felt like an errant child being punished for asking rude questions. Dammit, it had only been a polite enquiry!

He strode quickly round a corner, but slowed abruptly at the sight before him. There in the corridor a humanoid shape leaned against the metal wall, a nimbus of green and gold playing about it in shifting waves. Kirk moved closer, then blinked as a perfectly normal person walked towards him showing no traces of the light. He almost let the crewwoman pass, but called her back before she turned the corner.

"Lieutenant, come here a moment, will you?"

"Sir?"

"Did you see a - a light...uh, an aura of some sort..." He trailed off as her look of attention slowly changed to one of puzzlement and waved a hand sadly. "Never mind, it's not important...just an impression. Er - what's your name?"

"Lt. Uma, sir."

Feeling stupider by the minute, he dismissed her, ignoring the impression

of flowing lime-green clothes which touched his senses. She was gone before it clicked that he had never seen her before, although she wore the gold of the command section. That orange-red hair billowing about her head - surely he would have remembered that?

Sternly he shook himself out of the dazed dream, reminding himself of his original destination. The strange encounter had disturbed his mood, but he felt he would still have to speak to McCoy. Maybe it would be better now that his anger was gone. Maybe.

Nurse Chapel spun on her heel and headed for the door, her professional pride hurt by McCoy's cutting words. She paused for a second, mustering as much cold dignity as she could.

"I am extremely sorry, Doctor, it will not happen again. I know my place."

"Then remember that!" barked McCoy. "You're a nurse, not a ship's surgeon!"

She began to protest again, but felt it to be futile in the mood he was in. As she left, she belatedly acknowledged Kirk's presence. The door swished shut, leaving the captain to stare in surprise at McCoy.

"Something wrong, Bones? It's not often you have to check Nurse Chapel."

"Then it's about time I did it more often," the doctor muttered curtly. "What do you want?"

Kirk watched him closely, gauging his reactions. "Can we talk?"

"I'm busy."

"Then I'll make it an order," came the quiet reply. "Will you talk to me, or do I have to kick your butt all the way to the brig for insubordination?"

That made McCoy look up from his clipboard, but the anger was still there. His eyes glinted dangerously. "Okay. I'm listening. Talk."

"The main idea was for you to do the talking," Kirk countered, feeling his own anger return. "For the past two days you have deliberately been avoiding Spock and me, biting off people's heads for stupid, paltry reasons... Why?"

For a second McCoy looked as if he truly did not know the answer, then the mask of dull anger covered the confusion once more. "I won't have people questioning my judgement," he snapped finally.

"A simple enquiry isn't doubt of your ability, and that is all it ever was. Bones, if I said or did anything to upset you, then I'm deeply sorry. I apologise for whatever it was."

"It wasn't anything to do with you," the doctor murmured at last, seeming a little calmer.

Kirk felt the beginnings of relief. At least he was getting somewhere. "Spock, then - was it his fault? You know he would never intentionally hurt you - neither of us would. If you would just explain..."

The anger flared up again. "There is nothing to explain, Captain! If I can't get on with my work in peace then - then I might as well hand in my resignation!"

Alarmed, Kirk hurried to his side, seeing properly for the first time the beads of sweat on McCoy's face. He gripped his friend's shoulders, felt the deep-rooted trembling within.

"Bones! What is it? You're ill, you shouldn't... I'll get M'Benga - "

"No!" gasped McCoy, holding on to Kirk as a drowning man holds an anchored branch. Kirk helped him to one of the beds, sudden fear lancing through him at the dangerous pallidness and coldness of McCoy's skin. The doctor held onto his hand, gripping it with the strength born of fear. It was some minutes before he could speak again.

"Never...never mind M'Benga just now...just get Spock..."

Confusion flickered across Kirk's face. "Spock? Why? I don't..."

"Get him, Jim!"

As if the act of speaking had taken his remaining strength, he flopped back on the pillow, his breathing suddenly loud and rasping. Kirk ran to the desk comm, doing as McCoy had bade him before hurrying back to the doctor's side.

Mere minutes had passed when Spock strode through the door, his eyes widening in concern at the sight of McCoy fighting for his very life. Without a word he sat on the edge of the bed, one hand reaching to position itself on McCoy's face while the other grasped the doctor's. Kirk stood at the bed, unsure what was going on even yet. How could Spock have known what was wrong with Bones? And why the meld?

Through anxious minutes he watched. Watched as McCoy twisted and squirmed in Spock's grasp, his breathing alarmingly laboured. Watched as Spock's lips moved, murmuring silent words only the doctor's mind could hear. Watched as McCoy's breathing steadied and colour returned to his cheeks. Kirk moved closer, just in time to see McCoy's eyes open and a crooked smile curve his lips.

"Hello, Jim. I'm back."

Behind him Spock broke contact, toppling over as soon as he had done so. Kirk spun round to catch him, helping him over to the next bed.

"I am quite well, Captain," the Vulcan murmured, but he still accepted Kirk's support.

"Make sure he's okay, Jim," said McCoy. "He's just kept me alive."

Kirk looked from one to the other, relieved they were both well, but still puzzled as to what had happened. He sat heavily on McCoy's bed, reaction finally catching up. He glanced sideways at the friend he had nearly lost, a resigned grin on his face.

McCoy returned his grin, quiet sobriety in his eyes. "It's hard to explain, Jim, but since I 'discharged' Ahanu I've been in a trance of some sort. I only came to my senses while we were talking. These past two days I've been... Oh, darn it, Spock can explain it better than I can!"

Both of them looked to the Vulcan, who was rapidly regaining strength. He studied McCoy for a second, assuring himself that the doctor was as well as he sounded. It had been a near thing.

"It was a thing I have never come across before," he began, looking at Kirk. "Apparently, when Ahanu left here, he induced in McCoy's mind a telepathic comm- and somewhat like a hypnotic trance. This instructed McCoy to react angrily to any enquiry about the Indian and to defend his 'decision' completely. If this did not work...he was commanded to die."

"To die?" A look of shock and horror formed on Kirk's face. "Then that was why Bones collapsed so suddenly! Ye gods... Why should Ahanu do such a thing?"

"He obviously did not wish anyone to find out his true telepathic ability. He might well have succeeded had his control not momentarily failed when I met him in the corridor."

"I knew I was being unreasonable, Jim, but I couldn't stop myself becoming angry," McCoy put in. "And earlier, when you kept probing and I couldn't find a reason, I felt something inside my mind telling me to die. I fought it, but... I just thank god the trance didn't prevent me from asking for Spock..."

Their eyes met, transmitting the awareness of how much they owed the Vulcan.

"It was close, Bones."

McCoy closed his eyes, shuddering at the memory. "Too close."

Spock waited a while before saying, "We must find Ahanu before he does kill someone."

"He may have already," McCoy said bluntly. He explained further. "On the same day I let Ahanu go, young Ensign Ferrier was found dead on Deck 6. All tests showed it was a heart attack, and I guess my state of mind prevented me from questioning the death of a perfectly healthy man in tip-top condition. Now I'm not so sure."

Kirk's jaw set. "So...we can assume it was probably Ahanu's doing. We have to find him."

Spock swung his legs over the edge of the bed. "I will begin searching at once, Captain."

"What - Hold it right there, Spock," Kirk said firmly. "From what you said, he is aware you know he's telepathic, so he isn't going to be too well-disposed towards you! No, I'll send out security teams..."

"We have no real idea of his full potential, Jim," Spock replied. "I am telepathic myself, so if he is driven into a corner, I am perhaps better equipped than most to deal with him. Besides, in a way it is my fault he is free to do as he will. I should have sensed his mind in the beginning. I let him walk away without probing further."

Neither of them had any answer to that firm conviction, so Spock left as he wished, while Kirk mustered search teams and warned the crew of Ahanu's dangerous ability.

Christine Chapel left her quarters and walked slowly along the corridor, deep in thought. Dr. McCoy's words had cut deeply, and she wondered if she could bring herself to look him in the face again. If there had been a reasonable explanation for his angry reaction, but there wasn't...

The tall stranger they had picked up from planet 789/Z the other day passed her, smiling pleasantly. Chapel automatically returned his greeting, her thoughts elsewhere.

"Christine..."

The nurse froze, unable to believe the voice she had heard. It was impossible! And yet... She half-turned, hardly daring to breathe.

"Roger?"

His eyes seized hers, transmitting scenes of such obscenity and vile lewdness Chapel felt physically sick. She reeled as he toyed with her mind, drowning in a sea of filth. With an effort she tore herself from his hold, running away before he could seize her again. Insane, cruel laughter followed her every step.

Greatly amused, Ahanu watched her go, exulting in his power. He swung round and headed for a place with more people he could toy with. It was gratifying to feel their fear, see their struggle to get away. In the midst of his anticipation came unbidden a blurred vision of a brown/green city surrounded by brilliance beyond imagining. Great sorrow welled up to engulf his heart, and tears came to his eyes..

//Get out!// Ahanu cried, trying to quash the other's memories. They persisted and a green-gold light began to spread about him, reaching outwards to fill the passage.

//No! Not again!//

Suddenly the light flickered, fading to wisps of smoke. Ahanu knew a savage joy. He had beaten it back! The demon was trapped, growing weaker by the minute. Soon, soon he would destroy it for all eternity, and be at peace.

"Ahanu."



He jumped at the quiet voice, turning in surprise to face the Vulcan. Why had he not sensed him? His gaze flickered over Spock to Chapel watching a few yards behind and to the phaser steadily pointing towards him. He laughed, pointing at the weapon.

"I can destroy that with a thought!"

"It is most likely," agreed Spock. "However, there are other ways of subduing you, and either way you will still go back to Sickbay and the help you know you need."

"I need no one's help! I shall purge the demon myself!"

"But who will you take with you in your exorcism?" Spock asked quietly. "You have already killed one man, and almost caused the death of another."

"It was this inside me!" the Indian cried. Fearful of what might happen next, he lashed out at Spock, forcing the Vulcan to his knees. Spock gasped with pain, unable to fight against the fear-born power. He collapsed like a sack of grain. Ahanu stared at him for a moment, then ran like a hare to the place he should have gone days before.

Chapel quickly checked the Vulcan's pulse, finding it reassuringly steady. She quickly contacted McCoy on the intercom, breathlessly explaining what had happened.

"I'm on my way now," McCoy replied instantly, but before she could answer Spock was already there at her side.

"You need not trouble yourself, Doctor. I am quite all right."

"How the hell do you know?" flared McCoy, wishing he was face to face with the Vulcan. "You even sound tired. Don't argue, Spock."

"I would never dream of it," Spock answered drily. "I repeat, I am well enough to continue the search. I believe he is headed for engineering. I would be grateful if you would inform the Captain. It will save me some time."

McCoy swore at the inanimate box beside him. Damn Spock's stubbornness! He went to contact the bridge, then remembered Chapel. "Christine? You still there?"

"Yes, Doctor. Mr. Spock has just left..."

"Get after him, will ya? Make sure he's really as well as he says he is. I'll be there as soon as I've spoken to the Captain."

Spock paused outside main engineering, taking time to prepare himself as much as possible for the battle which was sure to come once he stepped through that door. His nervous system was still jangling from Ahanu's first attack, and inside, a cool, logical voice told him the impossible odds of his surviving another. However, he had prevailed against 'impossible' odds before, and there was no other logical choice. The feed-back he had received from Ahanu had brought him here, and here he must remain. The last-ditch hope of the Indian was to make Scott blow up the Enterprise, somehow, thus destroying his 'demon' totally. The fate of innocent men and women made little difference to a man half-mad, and Spock knew he must keep Ahanu occupied until the security forces could capture him. An ironic smile quirked one corner of his mouth. Keeping the Human diverted would undoubtedly be easy, but there was no guarantee he could do it for long enough. He shrugged philosophically. If it didn't work, he for one would not be around to see it.

The sound of light running footsteps reminded him of Chapel's presence, a presence he certainly did not need at the moment. As the nurse breathlessly began to talk, he quietened her with a curt gesture of his hand. Chapel subsided, but still kept behind Spock when he walked slowly into the large chamber which housed the heart of the Enterprise. The floor, normally busy with red-shirted engineers, was abnormally quiet.

Spock walked into the centre of the floor, alert for any sudden trickery on Ahanu's part. He had obviously disposed of the men on duty, but of him or Scott there was no sign.

Unknown to him, the Indian watched from behind a computer block, Scott a frozen statue beside him. Ahanu was confused and frightened of what might happen. Spock had unwittingly forced his hand, making him flee like a frightened animal. Part of him wanted to run to these people, ask for their help in retaining his sanity, but another, more persistent part thought only of the new powers infused within; the powers he could use to rule an empire! A small whimper escaped his trembling lips. Then there was the third part... the alien thoughts and memories which constantly probed at his mind. They would not leave, and...and...his mind hurt!

In the midst of his trauma the alien moved to take control, but its senses were sluggish, not yet strong enough, and quickly the maniacal ideals regained their hold on Ahanu.

A dark light shone in his eyes as he instructed Scott to prepare the engines for the explosion which would destroy the ship. The engineer walked stiffly from his position towards the matter/antimatter console, every fibre of his being screaming against it. Spock started towards him, torn between the danger Ahanu presented and stopping the Scot before he did irreversable damage.

"Mr, Scott!"

Unheeding, Scott moved on, and suddenly Spock had other things to consider as a bright white-hot flame spurted up, flaring towards him before he could dodge it. It surrounded him, burning deeply with a coldness more crippling than fiery heat. He fought back with every defence he knew, but still the cold burned, eating into his very bones.

It was gone.

Spock regained his feet, but he was no longer in the engineering deck. All about him vague patterns, shapes and colours weaved a madman's design through grey, palpable light. He was now in a realm of the mind - Ahanu's.

//Why didn't you stay away?// The plaintive voice sounded weak and pathetic, almost in tears. //I didn't want to kill, but I had to! It made me... If you had stayed away I could have stopped it. I would be dead by now if - //

//You interfered again!// A loud strident voice drowned out the other, reverberating in the thick atmosphere. //I have more power than you can comprehend, yet still you interfere! You will regret doing so, Vulcan!//

Colours of an alien spectrum whirled in confusing eddies, dazzling his sight as they burst into radiant flashes of hues he had no name for. Instinctively Spock gathered all his strength and knowledge, endeavouring to alter the pulsating morass to something calmer by guiding it with his own limited telepathy.

For a moment it worked. The confusion died to a quiet glow no longer dazzling to the senses. He took the chance to create a place of his own making and gradually the familiar rocks and dunes of his home planet solidified in the deserted void. Here was territory he was familiar with - its very presence strengthened him, although he knew it was an illusion of his making. Tensed for Ahanu's return, he waited.

Around Spock red-gold sand stretched to infinity, its smoothness broken here and there by jagged lava rocks beaten into misshapen images by the harsh sand-laden winds. To survive in such a land a race had to be strong, and Spock gathered that inherited strength in preparation.

A faint call drew his attention to the crest of a dune some distance away. A figure stood there, lime-green cloth billowing about her frail body. She cried out urgently, trying to tell him...what?

She wavered, disappeared, and Ahanu was there, standing in a blaze of weird light, fear and hatred combined in his face. Spock looked quietly towards him.

//I can defeat you even here!// rasped a voice unlike that of the man who stood there.

//Perhaps, the Vulcan replied. //I will still do my utmost to stop you, //

From nowhere a strong wind sprang up, clutching with greedy fingers at Spock's shirt. Sand stung his face and hands until he forced back the thought which had made it so.

//You are only a touch telepath, // Ahanu sneered, contempt in his tone. //You blunder along in your little world, accepting the awe and confidence of others in your ability. Has your Captain any idea of how limited your powers really are? Humans are so easily impressed. //

//You are Human. You were born so. //

//I was reborn!// A bright pillar of flame reared up, its intense heat forcing Spock to retreat. The next moment it was gone, the reason for the anger already forgotten. //I...who was once so proud of his humanity, am Human no more. //

In the troubled eyes Spock saw the frightened man Ahanu had become, cowering behind his unwanted strength. The Vulcan felt some hope rise. If he could talk to that terrified individual, help him banish the personality his mind had created to wield the powers...

//Damn you! //

He had no time to recover as the angry words merged into a roaring gale which lifted him into a tossing whirlpool of darkness. He felt himself fall painfully onto a hard surface, then all such sensation vanished with the return to reality. It was some time before he realised a certain doctor was leaning over his limp body, the scanner whirring softly as it was passed over him.

McCoy watched Spock's eyes slowly open with a deep feeling of relief. He exchanged glances with Chapel before turning round,

"He's still alive, Jim. Weak, but alive."

Some of the tension eased itself from Kirk's shoulders as the hazel eyes communicated his own relief to McCoy. He thanked the gods they had got here in time. When he had come in to find Spock crumpled on the floor with Ahanu standing nearby he had thought the Vulcan was dead. One of the security men had promptly felled Ahanu with a heavy stun blast, but that had not solved all their problems. Behind them they had found Scotty determinedly preparing to blow up his beloved engines. He had had to be roughly hauled away from the console, but after a while he stood calmly. Ahanu had forgotten him.

Kirk walked over to the unconscious Indian, anxious to know what had happened between him and Spock. He shivered. Almost losing both friends in one day was much too close for comfort.

"We never dreamed he held so much power," he murmured. "Spock, why didn't he - " The sentence remained unfinished as an unseen force picked Kirk up, tossing him like a rag doll across the open space. He slammed painfully against the unyielding wall, the impact expelling the air from his lungs.

"Jim!" McCoy cried, but he too was thrown away by the invisible hand. Chapel and the security men went the same way, landing in crumpled heaps against walls and consoles. Ahanu, who should have remained unconscious for a good few hours, rose swiftly, naked hatred in his face. His eyes moved round the people, fixing on Spock.

"You tried to trick me! You tried to distract me so your friends could kill me! For that I will kill you!"

"No!" shouted Kirk, pushing himself up. "It wasn't his fault. I ordered him to do it. I ordered you stunned!"

"It matters not," came the cold reply. "He has interfered in my plans once

too often. I will allow no more!"

His dark gaze fixed on the Vulcan, the others now forgotten in his single-minded desire for revenge. A strange smile lifted the corners of his mouth.

"You are dead, Mr. Spock."

Imagine you have died, have been buried for countless years under the confining earth. Imagine this, then imagine how you would feel, always assuming you could feel...

Spock screamed, a pain and fear totally indescribable lancing through him. He held himself tightly, the pain of the fingernails digging into his skin the only remaining link with reality. Kirk and McCoy ran to him, trying to wake him from the nightmare, but the shuddering continued unabated, painful gasps the only sound Spock could utter.

"For God's sake, stop it!" Kirk shouted. "There's no reason for this - he hasn't harmed you! If there is any mercy left in you, any humanity..."

"I am no longer Human!" Ahanu cried, secure in his triumph. "He must die, as will you all when I use my full power against you!"

"No, Ahanu. It is not yours to use. It is mine also, and I will not let you destroy anyone else!"

Surprised by the strange voice, Kirk quickly looked behind and stared in astonishment.

In the corner of the room, blinding colour shifted in rainbow curtains almost too dazzling to look at for long, and in the centre of the maelstrom a small figure robed in green stood defiant.

Ahanu stared at her, terror etched sharply in his body. He backed away, arms held defensively before his face. At the same instant, Spock collapsed with a sobbing gasp, gulping air into his starved lungs.

The girl moved closer, her slanting violet eyes showing none of the mercy Ahanu begged for. Through the light Kirk caught a glimpse of her red-gold hair and remembered where he had seen her before. He watched in silence, aware they could do nothing in this sudden confrontation.

"Back, demon!" howled Ahanu. "You may have escaped my body, but I can still defeat you. I will kill you!"

Profound sadness was expressed in her liquid gaze. She shook her head. "Ahanu, you will not, because the power is shared, and I have regained my strength."

Her eyes closed and her fists clenched with concentration. Ahanu seemed to shrink physically, the hatred slowly replaced by intense gratitude and peace of mind.

"Thank you," he whispered. "Let me die now, as I should..."

The girl's voice broke in a sob as she replied. "I cannot, Ahanu. We are one now. I wish it were not so."

The Indian folded limply, his eyes closed in sleep, a child-like smile on his lips. For a few brief minutes the girl gazed down at him, then turned her attention to the people watching. The aura of light winked out, leaving her alone and vulnerable in the unfamiliar room. Scanner in hand, McCoy hurried over, but was gently held at bay, the violet eyes expressed gratitude for his concern.

"I will be well in a moment, Doctor. Please do not worry. It is only a weakness brought on by the transition."

"Who...are you?" Kirk asked, having finally found his tongue. He noticed Spock groggily trying to get up, and went to help him.

The girl met his enquiry with an impish grin. "Do you not remember? I am Uma." The outline of a uniform formed momentarily on her body. "I wish that I

could have talked with you then, but I was not yet strong enough, and soon after, Ahanu took over again."

Kirk nodded. "I remember all right, but where do you come from? Why does Ahanu call you a demon?"

A brief flicker of pain crossed her fine-boned face. "Perhaps he is right," she murmured softly. "Although I did not mean to, it was I who drove him insane."

Kirk and Spock exchanged glances, and McCoy looked at Uma with a new wariness in his eyes. The girl guessed their thoughts and sighed, biting her lip.

"Please - do not judge me so soon. You do not know the truth behind what appears to be pure cruelty. I will explain it all...but please, may I sit down first?"

Slightly embarrassed by the impression she had received, Kirk quickly guided her to one of the nearby seats. He hardly felt the feather-light touch where her hand rested momentarily on his arm. It crossed his mind that she seemed very young and fragile to contain the power she undoubtedly wielded.

She smiled at him, having caught the fleeting thought. "You are correct, Captain. I am young. Far too young to do what I have in this past while, but not...not too young to kill."

"Then it was you who killed Ferrier," accused McCoy, but Uma shook her head.

"No, that was Ahanu - or rather, his madness. I deeply regret that I was not strong enough to prevent him. He took me unawares - I had not expected such animosity. However, the fact remains, he killed one innocent. I have killed my whole race... It was no fault of mine, but I murdered them just the same."

In halting, reluctant tones Uma told them her story, and slowly they realised when she had meant by her admission.

"Even yet I am not sure of what truly happened, but I do know I was the catalyst of our doom. So long ago... I contracted a rare disease, incurable and terminal. I - I could have borne that, I think, but for some reason the virus mutated in my bloodstream...mutated to create a new, deadlier disease no-one could halt. In mutating, it did something to me - I recovered; but unknowingly I carried a killer virus... I watched my parents and my betrothed die... Thank the planet it was swift and painless - but it killed just the same, until only I, the carrier, was left. All Tallowyar's children were dead, and only I remained..." Her voice dropped to a whisper. "It was unendurable."

A poignant silence settled around the saddened group. No-one wished to be the first to probe further, but at last Spock asked, "How long ago was this?"

"I tried not to count the days." Uma sighed. "And your ways of measuring time mean nothing to me. I only know it was too long and too lonely for me to live with." Her eyes lifted to gaze searchingly at Kirk and McCoy. "Perhaps you will not completely understand such loneliness. To a telepath, oneness is the ultimate hell. Never to touch another's mind is unimaginable."

Kirk's eyes moved to where Spock stood, impassive and apparently suffering no ill-effects from Ahanu's attack. Did he sometimes feel this loneliness, cut off from the contact of other telepaths? The ultimate hell...

"But Ahanu Whitewing was never telepathic," McCoy said. "Why did you - how did you enter his mind?"

"Once again, it is not easy to comprehend, Doctor," she answered evenly. "My people are - were - never alone as a single entity. At the correct time, we join - joined - with another whom we knew was compatible. It was very carefully prepared for, as the joining was for life, and the two became as one. Together, we found total contentment and the deep contact and awareness of our world, Tallowyar. That is why Tallowyar died - it could not live without us. Can you understand?"

McCoy blinked, "I...I think I do, a little."

"They lived in total empathy with their planet, Doctor," Spock explained, "knowing the essence of the world and its creatures. You might liken it to having an extra sense."

The look on McCoy's face showed he hadn't quite grasped the idea, but the customs of Uma's people had to take second place as the girl gasped and swayed precariously in her chair. McCoy moved to help, and this time she accepted the scanner and the supporting hand, closing her eyes in exhaustion. McCoy frowned at the readings he was getting and turned to Kirk.

"I don't know exactly what half these readings are, but one thing is for sure - something is tearing her apart atom by atom."

Uma steadied herself with a hand on his arm, waiting until her breathing had returned to normal. "I can explain... It took a great deal of effort to separate this completely. I should return, but I must explain everything to you first. I do not wish to be condemned."

"No matter what happened, I doubt any of us could condemn you, Uma," Kirk assured her.

"Thank you for that, at least," Uma said simply. "How is Ahanu?"

"He's sleeping peacefully," reported Chapel, who had been checking his condition.

Uma smiled with relief. "That is good. I did not want to hurt him, but I had been alone so long... When I sensed his thoughts on Tallowyar the surge of relief and happiness was such that I did not see his strangeness. He was searching for something, and in my ignorance I thought he was one of my race searching for survivors. I - I joined with him; only then discovering the bitterness and hatred gnawing at his sanity."

"Then why didn't you withdraw?" asked Kirk.

"It was too late. I was weak from lack of food and rest, also my mental preparation for death. I craved the merging of minds so much I ignored the dangers." Tears glistened in her eyes. "My merging drove him to insanity. He could not accept it." She glanced up at Spock. "I am sorry for the pain you suffered at his hands, Spock. I could not fully control my powers when so weak, and sometimes he managed to take over. I knew if I seized my chance while he was so occupied, I could escape for a while. You understand, my physical body remained behind when I merged with Ahanu; what you see is a...a projection. A very solid one, which can even show on your scanner, Doctor - but still a projection."

"I understand," Spock said without resentment. "However, what can you do now? Is it impossible to leave Ahanu, perhaps merge with someone else?"

"Sadly, it is, or I would have left before to save him. As it is, I cannot leave him this way. I have already done too much damage through my foolish actions."

"So...you'll stay merged with Ahanu," Kirk said, looking at the man in question.

"There is no turning back from a complete merging, Captain, none at all. We must remain as one until we die."

McCoy interrupted in amazement. "You would willingly remain linked with a madman?"

"He is no longer mad," Uma assured him. "The sudden influx of my personality did the damage, but now I am stronger, I can shield my thoughts from him. Gradually he will come to accept me as I help him. We will be a peaceful entity, he and I."

She rose, moving slowly to Ahanu's slumbering form. Slim fingers lightly



touched his dark hair, and she sat by his side.

The same thought occurred to Kirk, Spock and McCoy simultaneously, but it was the Captain who said, "Uma, Tallowyar is destroyed. It blew up. Where will you go?"

"I do not know," she replied softly, keeping her eyes on Ahanu.

Spock moved forward to stand beside Kirk. "Captain, may I suggest a place where they could live in relative peace?"

Kirk eyed him thoughtfully. "You mean Vulcan, Spock? It is a possibility, I suppose."

"They would be among telepaths who understood them, at least."

Uma lifted her head as she considered Spock's suggestion. "I think Vulcan would do as well as anywhere. I remember your image of it in your fight against Ahanu. It was...severe, but beautiful, like some parts of Tallowyar. I think we could grow to love Vulcan even as you do."

McCoy could not resist a quick scrutiny of Spock's expression at that, but his face was as closed as ever.

An exclamation from Kirk brought the doctor's attention back to Uma, but of the girl there was no sign. Only Ahanu lay there, and now there were signs of him waking up. They walked over as the Indian slowly came to himself. He yawned widely, staring at them in astonishment.

"What... Where is this?"

"Don't you remember?" asked Kirk.

Ahanu's eyes widened in puzzlement. "Remember? I don't... Yes, yes, I remember something. I was unwell, I think. Someone helped me, is still helping... When will I arrive on Vulcan?"

McCoy looked with satisfaction at Spock and Kirk. "She did it. Gradually he'll learn more, when he can take it."

Ahanu looked up at him. "You are...a doctor. I feel sure I know you, but my memory..."

McCoy smiled reassuringly. "It's all right, Ahanu, we know, Now I think you had better come to Sickbay and rest for a while. You must be tired after all you've done."

"Yes... I do feel tired."

"The ultimate schizoid," murmured the doctor. "Only this time, one personality at least knows what's going on. Nurse, will you help me get him to his bed?"

Gently, McCoy and Chapel guided the confused man out, marvelling that his slim frame held two single identities. Kirk watched their departure in thoughtful silence. He shook his head in wonder, finally turning to look at Spock with quiet consideration.

"Spock...what she said about telepaths on their own... Do you sometimes feel the same?"

"She is a more advanced telepath, Captain and we have already seen she depends on contact much more than we Vulcans," Spock answered non-committally.

"That's not what I asked."

The shadowed eyes studied him for a moment, then Spock slowly answered his question. "It might have been true once, certainly. It is no longer so."

Kirk read the rest of the answer in his eyes and smiled in acceptance of what his friendship meant to a man separated from his home and way of life.

The moment was neatly broken by Scott coming out of his daze and hurrying

across to Kirk.

"Captain, what happened there? I mind Ahanu comin' in here, an' next thing I kent, that girl was there! Could ye please explain it?"

The Captain grinned at him and shrugged with an air of resignation. "Scotty, both you and Starfleet Command want to know what happened, and I'm not entirely sure where to start or how!" He turned appealingly to the Vulcan behind him.

"I will try to help you in your explanation, Captain," Spock solemnly told him.

"Thanks. Well, Scotty, it's like this..."

+++++

TRUSTED TO KNOW THE TRUTH by Gillian Catchpole

Jim Kirk went back to his quarters,  
His heartbeat sounding loud in his ears.  
For a long time he stared into the mirror  
Immersed in his own thought-filled eyes,  
Wondering at the trust placed in him.  
He had sensed the strain,  
The crumbling of controlled defences.  
The hands tightly clasped behind the back,  
He was sure, to stop him see them shaking.  
A man fighting to keep concentration steady,  
Willing the mind to conquer the body.  
And entrusted to him to keep it safe,  
The reason why.  
Words mouthed on hesitant lips,  
Explanations wrenched out from the depths of embarrassment.  
A man driven by a compulsion,  
Unable to resist the lure of madness.  
The destruction of logic by a lustful insanity.  
A deeply personal, private shame.

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CHILD OF THE UNIVERSE by Ann Smith

Child of the Universe,  
Reach out...touch the stars.  
Let your mind flow...beyond tomorrow.  
In the limitless reaches of space...  
Lies your future.  
Watch...wait...learn,  
When the day comes...stand tall.  
Be not afraid to say:  
"I am a child of the Earth...I am ready."  
"In friendship I greet you...I am Man,  
What I am I give freely,  
We can learn...each of the other,  
Be part of a whole."  
Children of the Universe,  
Each a part of his own,  
United by space and time,  
In friendship's hand,  
Lies Universal peace.

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NO OTHER CHOICE by Valerie Piacentini

Spock was engaged in repairing the guidance system of the wrecked shuttlecraft when McCoy beamed down from the *Enterprise* and beckoned him aside.

"A moment, Doctor. Mr. Scott, how long do you estimate to complete repairs?"

"I'll have her ready to go in an hour," the engineer promised. "She's ta'en an awfu' battering, but she'll fly again."

"Thank you. Inform me if you encounter any difficulties."

"It's a mess, all right," McCoy commented as the two moved away. "Lucky you were able to set her down, Spock."

The Vulcan offered no reply, but his eyes asked a question; the doctor grinned in answer. "Jim's fine - he's resting easily now. I want to check you out when we get back to the ship, though...and I suppose I'd better do a post-mortem on the pilot."

Spock stiffened slightly at that, and the keen blue eyes narrowed in concentration - Spock was disturbed about something...that control was too rigid, too perfect.

For the moment however he chose not to pursue the matter directly; glancing round at the tranquil landscape he remarked appreciatively, "If you had to get yourselves stranded, at least you picked a pleasant spot."

"You think so? The interference on the sensors effectively concealed the dangers of this planet."

"Dangers?" McCoy looked around again. "No predators, plenty of water, vegetation, no sentient life-forms...what could harm you here?"

"The water is poisonous to all non-indigenous life forms. It was fortunate that I was able to filter out the harmful ingredients, as all the emergency supplies in the shuttlecraft were destroyed. I could not risk moving the Captain, and my own injuries, though minor, slowed me to such an extent that I could not search for a pure water supply - if one exists here. We were dependent on what we could find in the immediate locality."

"It's clear you did well enough; Jim lost a great deal of blood, but the food you were able to find sustained his strength...if he'd gone hungry he would have been too weak to survive. Where's Syron's body?"

"Over here."

"You had to kill, of course...Spock, I'm sorry, I know how you must feel...but he needed meat... An animal's life - or Jim's..."

"I did not kill." The Vulcan halted abruptly and began to dismantle a pile of stones.

McCoy looked down in horror. "That didn't happen in the crash!" He looked up, accusation dawning. "It's been...cut..."

"You must understand." So expressionless, that alien face, but the quiet voice pleaded. "Everything...all the plant life, every animal I tested, contained the same poison as the water. There was nothing - nothing - that he could consume safely. Death if he ate, death if he did not. I chose that he should live. Doctor, he does not know...he must not know!"

"But...this!"

"Unpleasant, but necessary. The consumption of flesh to sustain life is abhorrent, but to permit suffering and death when it can be avoided is criminal. Cultural taboos are strong...but there was no other choice. Syron was dead and beyond harm; Jim lived, and could be saved." The strong hands gripped McCoy's shoulders, forcing him to meet the anguished gaze. "Should I have let him die, Doctor? Should I?"

Spock had his answer as the blue eyes dropped before him.

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MORE THAN DEADLY by Kelly Mitchell

"Steady on course, Captain."

Jim Kirk settled back in his chair. How normal, he thought, Sulu's words were, but after the crisis of the past few days, how good it was to hear them.

He looked around the bridge. All of the usual crew were there apart from Spock, who had been taken down to Sickbay by McCoy to receive his rejuvenation shot about half an hour ago. The ship was back on course for Starbase 10 and everything was running smoothly. After the desperation of those days when the radiation sickness picked up on Gamma Hydra IV had threatened the lives of Spock, Scott, McCoy and himself, it felt good to be able to relax within the confines of normality.

His thoughts were interrupted by a call from Sickbay. "Sickbay to bridge."

"Kirk here. What is it, Bones?"

"Captain, can you come down to Sickbay, please? Now."

Still feeling a little euphoric after the recent escape from death, Kirk didn't notice the careful neutrality with which McCoy's request had been made. "Sure, Bones, I'll be right down."

He handed the con to Sulu and made his way over to the turbolift. After the stiffness and muscular aches of the past few days, even the simple act of walking was a pleasure. It was good to feel power and flexibility in his limbs again.

Youth, he thought as he entered the lift and grasped the lever, is something you only really appreciate when it's gone.

Sickbay...he knew he would probably find Spock there. Remembering the scene after the competency hearing, he realised ruefully that he had an apology to make. Those angry words had been said in the heat of the moment, and immediately regretted, but - and he smiled at the thought - even those words had not been enough to drive Spock from his side.

The turbolift deposited him on Sickbay's level and he stepped out. Probably, he thought, McCoy needed to see him to make a final check-up; there had not been sufficient time to make proper tests for any adverse effects of the adrenalin injection. He felt fine, in fact, better than ever, but it would be nice to have McCoy's confirmation.

He knew the moment he entered Sickbay that something was wrong. The look on McCoy's face told him so.

"What is it, Bones? What's the matter?"

Then he turned, to see Spock lying on one of the diagnostic beds. His face was still lined, the black hair still peppered with grey.

"Bones - " He turned to McCoy, a strange feeling growing in the pit of his stomach, "Haven't you given him the antidote yet?"

The doctor took a deep breath and looked steadily into Kirk's eyes. "We've tried it, Jim. It just - hasn't worked."

McCoy's words hung in the air. The silence was electrifying, and Kirk paled as the full impact of the situation sank in. The horror in his eyes met the bleak helplessness in McCoy's, and even as he spoke Kirk knew that he was grasping at straws; that McCoy would already have done everything possible, and yet...

"Bones! It's got to work!" He grabbed McCoy's shoulders in a vice-like grip, desperation punctuating every word. "YOU'VE - GOT - TO - MAKE - IT - WORK!"

McCoy tried to ignore the agony in his voice, and then -

"Jim..." Spock's voice came quietly from the couch, and Kirk moved to him, ashamed at having forgotten that Spock was indeed conscious. McCoy rubbed at

bruised muscles in relief and looked on. Kirk laid an arm on Spock's shoulder and looked down on the tired face on the pillow, struggling to mask the sudden surge of pity that washed over him. The Vulcan deserved his loyalty, his support, his help; for he had never given less to Kirk. But no - not pity. Never pity. He wouldn't wish that on anyone - least of all Spock. He shuddered as he remembered the scene at the competency hearing. Uhura, Sulu, Scotty, Dr. Wallace, Bones, Spock...even Commodore Stocker; their good intentions and loyalty commendable - their pity, unbearable.

Kirk perched on the edge of the bed and tried a reassuring smile. "Don't worry, Spock. There's got to be a way out of this...and - we'll find it."

The dark eyes looked up at him; read the unspoken 'I promise'. It was obviously time to prepare Kirk for the illogic of trying to accomplish the impossible, and he tried.

"Captain...if Dr. McCoy has..."

"He's not God, Spock! I'm sorry, Bones, but you've had a bad time of it yourself. Maybe there's something you've missed. Maybe the dosage was wrong -"

McCoy was irritable, partly as a result of the pressure he'd been under lately. Jim was right there - but it was more than that... "Don't you think I haven't tried that? It's that blasted Vulcan blood of his! I can't..."

Kirk kept his voice calm. "All right, Bones, take it easy. Let's talk this through. It helped before." He shot Spock a grateful glance, remembering how they had come up with the idea of the antidote in the first place.

"Question - why shouldn't it work? What's so different about Spock apart from..."

McCoy interrupted impatiently. "He's a Vulcan. We know that, Jim."

Kirk stopped him with a command glare, and said, "The antidote you prepared - " He paused, unsure of the correct medical phrasing. "Bones, wasn't it supposed to simulate a similar reaction to fear - like when Chekov was scared to death on the planet surface?"

McCoy nodded. "Essentially correct, Jim. Certain emotions cause the body to produce adrenalin; to speed up natural reaction to a given situation. We used hyronalin to - Jim, I'm not sure I follow."

"Neither do I, Bones, but there's something not quite..." He shook his head, frustration growing.

Meanwhile, Spock had realised the angle the questioning was taking. His mind struggled with a possible theory. Thinking seemed so hard of late. Facts drifted around but wouldn't come together without a considerable amount of effort, and he found that...extremely annoying. He propped himself up suddenly, brown drawn together as an idea formed.

"Spock?" Kirk prompted.

"I am a Vulcan," Spock said simply, as if that explained everything.

McCoy couldn't wait any longer. "Well, get on with it, Spock!"

"As you quite correctly state, Doctor, my Vulcan blood is to blame for our current dilemma. Adrenalin would speed up the reaction of the Human heart and body, but a Vulcan is not prone to such outbursts of emotion. Fear, anger and other similar displays are never present - are suppressed. The Human factors in my blood were not sufficient for the antidote to work in entirety, although I think you may find that the aging process has slowed to some extent."

McCoy grinned in delight and slapped Kirk on the back. "Well, I'll be..."

Kirk felt suddenly tired and relieved, all at the same time, and winced as McCoy landed another slap on his back. Spock rescued him;

"Doctor, it is only a theory. I would suggest..."

"It'll work, dammit! I know it'll work! The only thing I've got to do now is figure out some way to get you excited about something..."

"That should prove...fascinating." Kirk smiled mischievously at Spock and headed for the door as McCoy started work.

"I'm gonna need your help on this, Spock. Now, just what can I arrange to get your adrenalin going?"

Spock suddenly looked very uncomfortable, and Kirk hesitated. He knew he should respect Spock's privacy, but downright Human curiosity got the better of him and he lingered a while.

He was still smiling as he carried the image of that last scene with him all the way to the bridge. The look on McCoy's face as Spock quietly informed him that the only solution to his problem "Had to do with...biology!"

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TO CHRISTINE by Beryl Turton

There is no way he can return your love,  
Perhaps, in some far distant future  
He may find a way.  
But until then have faith,  
Look to your pride  
And wait.

All he denies himself  
He must.  
His heritage demands this of him.  
Tearing at his very soul,  
Splitting him asunder,  
Taunting his feelings, for he  
Must have none.

Can you imagine, if this were not so,  
What love from a Vulcan  
Would be like?  
Forceful, demanding, and yet so gentle,  
Lifting your heart, your soul,  
Your whole being  
Beyond the stars, the planets  
Into a realm beyond compare.

Until that time you must wait,  
Enjoy his nearness,  
Thrill to his voice.  
But above all, remember,  
That whatever seems impossible now,  
Could be yours one day,  
And your dreams, your hopes,  
And all your desires  
Will be fulfilled.

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SECURITY CHIEF: Anything you say will be held against you:

RILEY: Janice Rand!

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RILEY: Nurse Chapel, what would it take for you to kiss me?

CHAPEL: Chloroform.

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IN THE MIDST OF LIFE by Barry Maxwell

The door to his day cabin hissed shut and Captain James T. Kirk leaned back against its cool surface, eyes closed, momentarily relaxing and allowing the powerful shoulders to sag slightly. Then for perhaps the thousandth time since leaving that strange planet, his mind's eye pictured again that warm face and deep blue eyes of incredible beauty. His body tensed and he shook his head in an attempt to rid himself of the vision. She was dead. Gone.

It had been hard, almost impossible, to keep going for the six hours since returning from the ruined city with the rest of the landing party. Six hours in which Kirk had to suppress all feeling and thought for the woman he had loved and let die - struck down ruthlessly as he knew she had to be. The six hours remaining of his duty 'stint' in which he had to give all coherent thought to the running of his ship. It had been hard, but in some way he had been glad to be so occupied, thankful for even the routine boredom of paperwork and form-signing that kept his mind from dwelling on the life that could have been, kept that warm, lovely face from invading his thoughts. The face of a dedicated woman who had been bound to him by more than just love. She had been a key of the past of the entire Federation, of the four hundred and thirty crew aboard the Enterprise. Her survival would have meant their probable deaths - a price Kirk could not meet, no matter what he might feel for her.

Now, for the next sixteen hours he would be free of the running of the mighty Starship unless yellow or red alert were to be sounded. Sixteen hours in which to contemplate the events of the last six. Time...eternal Watcher who silently marked each passing instant of every life.

Again the face, this time with the full lips parted in a welcoming smile, eyes glowing in the half-light of the room, appeared before him. The image was so real that Kirk was convinced she stood in the room with him. He could smell that sweet perfume, hear her melodic laughter. He stumbled further into the room, his shadow moving faintly across the divider between his day and night cabins. He swung to face it.

"Edith..." It was a mere whisper, a forlorn plea. His eyes stung. He almost wished for the tears to fall, relieving the pain, but no tears came.

"Edith..." His voice was strange, the large lump in his throat causing his voice to sound strangled. Tears again welled in his eyes; he blinked rapidly to dispel them, but they remained. He groped forward in the darkness of unshed tears, searching for a hand-hold. Finding the edge of his desk, he clung to it desperately, savagely fighting back the emotion that threatened to engulf him.

It was thus that Spock found him. Back to the door, head bowed, gripping the edge of the desk so tightly that the knuckles of both hands showed white under the taut skin. Kirk had not heard the soft tap at the door, nor was he fully aware of the soft hiss as it opened to allow the Vulcan entry.

"Captain?" The voice cut through Kirk's thoughts as he slowly regained his composure. He became aware of his First Officer standing a respectful distance behind him.

"Captain Kirk?" The Vulcan stepped forward, concern clearly written across the deep lines of his face.

Kirk turned to face Spock, all trace of sorrow gone from his face. He forced his voice to sound natural. The concern that had clearly marked the other's features was now well-concealed by an expressionless mask.

"Mr. Spock?" Kirk heaved a mental sigh as the words sounded evenly enough.

"I felt it prudent to ensure you were all right following the events of the last six point two hours, sir," the Vulcan began.

Kirk tried to suppress a physical sigh, and failed. He gazed across the room.

"Sir?" The puzzled tone caused Kirk to return his gaze to the Vulcan. A small smile hovered about the edges of his mouth.

"Thank you, Spock." His voice was quiet, very quiet. "But as you can see, I am quite all right." He forced the smile onto his lips. His hazel eyes locked momentarily with two deep black ones, and in that instant he knew he had failed to fool Spock.

"If everything is in order..." Spock left the sentence unfinished deliberately.

The smile became more genuine, wiping away some of the pain Kirk felt and making him look ten years younger. He was fully aware of the Vulcan's words. Although they had not known each other long, both men had realised the loneliness the other suffered, and together they had found a strange unity that had already begun to develop into a friendship that was to know no bounds and reach beyond the understanding of all but a few. Each had consciously and sub-consciously striven to eradicate the barriers that lay between them, each being there when the other needed him, and here Spock was offering himself as support in Kirk's need.

At the same time, Kirk realised the futility of acting before his Science Officer. Instead he simply shook his head. "I'm sorry, Spock, but not this time. This is something I've got to see through for myself. It's something only I can do." The lump rose in his throat.

Spock nodded and turned to leave. He paused at the open door. His voice was gentle. "She was a fine woman, and I'm truly sorry - Jim." The door closed and Kirk was alone. He stood between the day and night cabins, deeply moved by the Vulcan's last words and the rare use of his Christian name.

The lump persisted in his throat; he attempted to swallow it, but only succeeded in choking. He moved to the bathroom. Reaching into the shower cubicle he selected the unit for 'hydro' and turned the water on full. His whole body shook. Spock's words re-echoed through his head, together with the screech of primitive tyres. A sob escaped his lips. He clasped his right hand over his mouth to stifle it, but more came, bursting out from behind his hand, causing him to bite down on his knuckles while he hugged himself with his left hand in an attempt to control his shaking. It hurt to breathe, and his eyes stung.

The beautiful face swam before him. He reached out with both hands in an attempt to touch the fair skin, caress the smooth cheeks, stretching forward as only empty air met his clutching fingers, he fell to his knees in the darkness of his own quarters.

James Kirk cried.

It has been said that the path of love  
Is never straight,  
And now I have found just what a bitter  
Twisted course it can take.  
It is many days now since that fateful -  
(Perhaps fatal would be more appropriate) -  
Day when a single, primitive vehicle  
Wiped away all that I held dear;  
The one woman I held aloft and cherished;  
A woman of beauty, intelligence and wit -  
A woman of compassion.  
But still I find no peace of mind.  
My life is becoming one continual wish for what  
Could have been - should have been,  
Relieved only by the routine of duty.  
My Lady, my beautiful Starship, the only other woman  
I could love,  
Surrounds me awake and sleeping,  
Protecting, pitying; but I find little peace with her.  
I am alone.  
Not the loneliness of command - that I can bear -  
But the loneliness of an empty heart and  
Mournful soul who have lost their love -  
Forever.

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A DAY OF BOREDOM by Sylvia Billings

He sat there surveying the bridge. Everything was working at maximum efficiency, no-one needed told to do their jobs, they were all doing them - expertly - and he was bored. BORED, BORED, BORED! For days now nothing had happened, not even a stray Romulan or Klingon to chase back to their own territory; right at this moment he would quite cheerfully have welcomed a Tribble on board - at least it would be a diversion of some kind.

Many thoughts had occurred to him over the past few days or relieve the monotony - from chasing Uhura around the bridge (although he might yet do that) to doing a streak down B deck.

The more he thought of this the more the idea appealed to him - after all, B deck was the women's quarters...

He got up and crossed to Spock - resisting the urge to do something outrageous to him - and simply said, "You have the con, Mr. Spock." and left the bridge.

He went quickly to his cabin and stripped off his uniform, pulled a bath robe around him and headed for B deck. Now he had actually started he felt...pleased with himself. He stepped from the lift and was quite upset that there was no one in sight. Still, he could wait. He hung around near the lift, walking up and down, and now beginning to feel a little stupid, when suddenly one of the doors opened and a young woman from the Medical section emerged. Now was his chance... He took a step forward, loosening his robe as he did so; as she drew level she smiled at him, glanced at his now open robe revealing his naked body underneath, looked him straight in the eye and said, "If I were you, Captain, I'd get dressed; you could catch your death of cold running around like that," then stepped into the waiting lift.

His face went deep crimson; grabbing the robe he drew it back around him, almost dived into the lift when it arrived and fled to his quarters. He hadn't been there above two minutes when his buzzer sounded. "Who is it?" he asked.

"McCoy!" came back the sharp reply. "Can I come in?"

"No!"

"Come on, Jim, let me in."

"No. Go away."

"Jim, I'll use the emergency override if you don't open this door."

Knowing McCoy meant what he said, he reluctantly opened the door. "Come on in then," he said grudgingly.

"I've had a report about you from one of my nurses."

"So? What's new, someone is always reporting to you."

"Not quite the way this report came."

Kirk put on his 'little boy innocent look' and just smiled.

"It won't work, Jim. What the hell were you intending to do?"

"If you must know - a streak."

"Then why in blazes didn't you?"

"What???!!!"

"Do you realise that girl is going demented in Sickbay wondering just what you intended to do?"

Kirk began to laugh. "She didn't seem too bothered at the time."

"Well, she is now. Get along to Sickbay and explain everything to her."

"Oh no."

"Oh yes, and right now."

"But...I'm not dressed."

"You weren't the last time she saw you either. So as you just said - what's new?"

"Come on, Bones, don't be ridiculous. Let me past to get some clothes."

"I thought you were the one who wanted to do the streak?"

"I was - then, but I feel damn foolish about the whole thing now...even standing here with just this robe on and only you present."

"So you should. It would serve you right if I really carried out my threat and made you go to Sickbay as you are; maybe it would teach you a lesson. Why did you want to a...streak...in the first place?"

Kirk tried to look away as he again turned crimson, but McCoy simply moved round to face him once more. "Well?"

"I was feeling...bored."

"Bored? Good god, man, the first time in weeks we have a nice quiet spell and you get bored. If you were so bored why didn't you come to me? I could soon have found you something to do. I wonder you didn't start to chase Uhura round as well."

Kirk suddenly laughed.

"Well, what's so funny?"

"It was just that that was my next idea."

"I give up. I really do."

At that moment the red alert was heard all over the ship. Without even thinking Kirk was over to the intercom. "What is it, Spock?"

"An unidentified ship has just appeared on the viewscreen and is attacking us. Shields are up and holding."

"Very good, Mr. Spock, I'm on my way." He turned to the doctor. "Well, was there anything else, Bones?"

"No, Jim, not a thing."

"Right - then if you'll excuse me, I have work to do." Quickly moving over to the door he left his room, heading for the bridge.

"One, two, three, four, five, six - " McCoy was slowly counting as Kirk burst back into his cabin.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you?"

Kirk was rushing about his cabin, getting his uniform together. "Yes, tell me," he said over his shoulder. "It wasn't until I was actually stepping into the lift and a Yeoman screamed that I saw I wasn't dressed and the robe had come open." He turned with an exasperated look at McCoy. "And don't just stand there laughing. If she reports this incident to anyone, I could be put on a charge. Why aren't you in sickbay, there is a red alert on you know?"

"Jim, there isn't any red alert."

"WHAT?"

"You were seen leaving your cabin and waiting on B deck, so Spock and I decided you must be up to something, and when my nurse reported seeing...well, what she did see...we had an idea what you were up to, so decided to teach you a lesson."

"But..."

"No buts. Now get dressed, and go back on duty, and another time you get bored...well, just stick with chasing Uhura; at least she can take care of

herself - and you too, I wouldn't be surprised." With that, McCoy left the Captain's quarters, leaving behind a Captain wondering how he was ever going to face his bridge crew again...or for that matter, the Yeoman who had been in the lift.

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WELL? by Barry Maxwell

McCoy stared anxiously across the instrument-laden table at an apprehensive Scott. "You sure you want to go through with this?" he asked, the words echoing around the otherwise deserted quarters. "You don't have to be a Human guinea-pig; I could always put a sample through an analyser."

Scott shook his head.

"But you realise what could happen if the formula is wrong?" A slight fear bit at the edge of McCoy's words. The Chief Engineer nodded. "You still want to go through with it?"

The short nod came again.

"Look, let me try. It'll be safer that way."

"No." The word forced its way out of Scott's lips.

"But look what happened last time. We thought we were right then."

"I'll be all right, provided you give me yon stuff."

"You're absolutely sure?" Another nod. "Positive?"

"Positive," Scott agreed and although he never said them, the words 'Just shut up and get on wi' it' completed his sentence.

Picking up the implied words, McCoy slowly reached forward and turned a small valve at one end of the complex mass of plexiglass tubing, liquid containers, heaters, collars and bunsen burners. A thin stream of a yellow-amber liquid fell from a tiny round opening directly under the valve and into a waiting squat glass. When the glass was half full, the doctor closed the valve and the flow of liquid ceased.

Slowly, he lifted the little receptacle and handed it, almost reverently, to the waiting Chief Engineer. Gingerly handling the glass as if it might explode, Scott held it up to the light. "I just hope we're right," he muttered.

Placing the rim of the glass against his lower lip, he tilted his head back and downed the liquid in a single gulp.

Across the table, McCoy stood stock-still, his fingers tightly crossed in a gesture of hope. If we're wrong this time, he thought. Seconds ticked by.

Scott stood, bolt upright, eyes closed and lips drawn out into a thin pink line. The silence grew. McCoy's heart slipped down past his stomach. He tasted the bitterness of defeat again. Finally he had to speak, even though he knew they had failed. "Well?" The word crackled across the stillness, destroying it in an instant.

Slowly, very slowly, Scott relaxed. He opened his eyes and stared at the doctor. Fearing the worst, McCoy repeated his question. "Well?"

Gradually, almost leisurely, a grin creased the Scotsman's rugged features.

"It worked?" McCoy gasped. "It's right?" Wonder filled his voice.

Scott nodded. "Aye, it's right," he agreed.

McCoy let out an uncharacteristic yelp of joy. "And you're fine?" he cried. Scott nodded. Another yelp of delight escaped McCoy's lips.

"But I would like to say..." Scott began ominously. McCoy stopped in the middle of an odd jig he was performing. He was at once serious. "...that that's the best glass o' Scotch I've tasted this side of Glasgow!" Scott cried, joining his old friend in a merry dance across the floor.

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LIKE SO MANY OF US by Therese Holmes

Five years is a long time. Long enough for a friendship to be born and grow. And with only the stars looking on, and beyond the stars more stars, it had been easy to forget other considerations and surrender to the moment. Past promises had begun to seem unimportant, and duty to heritage to face before indulgence of self.

As a child, many years ago, Spock had been faced with a decision: Vulcan or Human; logic or emotion. He had made his choice unwaveringly, and he had never regretted it. To say he had never once faltered on his chosen path, however, would be a trifle inaccurate, and no-one was more aware of it than Spock himself. For as long as he could remember, his existence had been a struggle for control, a fight to maintain at least a facade of cool reasoning logic. The results, to say the least, had been erratic; there had been times when he had clearly overcompensated, when his icy demeanour had surprised even Vulcans. Conversely, he remembered with chagrin several occasions when his control had slipped completely. The task had not grown easier with the passing years, and the last five in particular had made him ever more and more acutely aware of his divided parentage.

Surveying the damp grey walls imprisoning him, Spock knew he had reached the time for another decision.

"He's...what?"

"He is being detained, Captain Kirk. The All High Melson will decide what punishment is due."

"But..." Kirk stared in perplexity at the face on the viewscreen. It belonged to the High Chamberlain of Nolpor, the principal nation of the planet they were orbiting. "What was his crime, exactly?"

"He offended the All High Melson. It is an offence punishable by death, but since you are visitors to our country, the All High will exercise clemency."

"To what extent?"

"That is for the All High to decide."

"And...er...what was the exact nature of the - offence?"

"Captain, you would ask me to repeat a treasonable utterance? Really!"

"Of course not, Your Excellency. I apologise. But I'm afraid I don't quite understand. Mr. Spock was simply on a guided tour of the factory. He wasn't scheduled to meet the All High until tomorrow, when we go to the Palace."

"I am afraid that meeting has been cancelled, Captain. His Eminence, on hearing that a Vulcan was in the city, declared his intention of going at once to look at him, never having seen one before. Needless to say, he was not impressed."

"I see." Kirk strove to keep the coldness out of his voice. "But he would have seen him tomorrow anyway."

"His Eminence is a man of sudden impulses."

"Obviously."

"Captain, I am not here to make excuses for the All High. Punishment will be carried out on your First Officer at daybreak tomorrow. He will then be returned to you, and you will leave. Good day to you, Captain."

"Your Excellency - "

The screen was blank.

Starfleet had served him well.

In the years following the Kahs-wan, as he grew from a child to a man on the



hot sands of Vulcan, Spock had come to know himself intimately. Through meditation and a natural tendency to introspection, self-knowledge had grown, and he had begun to see clearly that simply to say 'I am a Vulcan' was not enough. He had practised diligently all the disciplines known to Vulcan mind, and a few others devised by himself, yet still he could not feel the calm for which he sought, that infinite peace that comes with the suppression of all turbulent emotion.

It had taken him a very long time to realise that his answer lay elsewhere. Just when the idea had first come to him, he could not now say. It was so obvious a step that he had since wondered frequently why it had not occurred to him earlier.

The high, barred window admitted the last long rays of the setting sun, sweeping in to strike the wall above his head. Lazily he watched the dust motes playing in its path, and remembered an evening twenty years earlier on Vulcan's Forge, when the powdery sand had danced in the breeze, and sparkled just like this. That had been the day he had bidden farewell to his homeworld.

The inflexible discipline of the Starfleet Academy had seemed like warm, encircling arms. He had accepted its embrace eagerly, feeling a burden gradually lift from his shoulders. Where before he had been stumbling blindly, he now had a carefully planned and well-marked route to follow. Nothing was easier than to stay firmly on course, for he had long ago mastered the technique of living in a vacuum, in isolation from his fellows. For the first time, his life had a direction and a purpose, and nothing could distract him from it.

The sun set, the dancing dust vanished, and Spock sighed. He could remember the exact moment five years ago when it had all begun to go wrong. He had never until then doubted that he was doing the right thing, that at the end of this road lay fulfilment. Then a pair of hazel eyes smiled into his, and the first semblance of a question began to form in his mind.

'Is this all that I am? Is there nothing more?'

The eyes said, 'Yes; much more.'

He had reached a cross-roads, but he had closed his eyes and pretended he was still marching onwards towards his original goal. By the time he had opened them again, to find he had been drifting in quite another direction, it had been too late to go back. A promise had beckoned him on, and he had not resisted. The rewards of this road were far greater than any to be had by following the dictates of logic and reason. So logic and reason had degenerated into a mere trick, a cover for the growing surge of emotionalism that was overtaking him.

He had, in fact, reverted to his old, pre-Starfleet ways; there was one Spock on show to the world, and another carefully hidden, but with an inconvenient tendency to emerge at times, and the two were constantly at war.

But he was older, wiser, and infinitely more secure. As long as he had somewhere to go, something to aim for, did it matter that his objective was not what he had originally envisaged, back on the Vulcan desert? He was learning things he could never even have conceived of in those days, and attitudes were bound to change under the onslaught of fresh ideas. So had he argued for close on five years, and even now he was reluctant to admit he might have been wrong. The warmth of those years was like a precious jewel, the jewel in the centre of his IDIC. Why should he turn his back on something that had given him so much?

In the darkness of the cell, Spock remembered a small boy, and a silent vow that not even the rigours of the Kahs-wan had been able to shake; and he felt the guilt of the betrayer.

Kirk stormed into Sickbay and demanded of McCoy what the hell Spock thought he was doing. The doctor, who had not heard the news, looked blank, so Kirk gave him the details.

"He's in prison down there. Seems he insulted the All High Melson - "

"The what?"

"Some tin-pot dictator. Spock managed to insult him and got himself thrown in jail. We were supposed to meet him tomorrow and arrange the mining treaty, but the High Chamberlain regrets that the meeting has been cancelled." He sat down heavily on one of the diagnostic beds. "What the hell do you suppose he can have said?"

McCoy shrugged. "Beats me. But if they throw Spock into jail just for some innocent remark, what won't they do to the Klingons when they move in?" He rubbed his hands gleefully at the thought.

Kirk grimaced. "Don't remind me of Klingons, Bones." He returned to his former subject. "I expect he was only joking. You know what a strange sense of humour he has."

"I find it strange to consider that Spock even has a sense of humour, but I know what you mean."

"If we tried to convince him he didn't mean it...?"

"They wouldn't believe you. He's a Vulcan after all, and you know Vulcans."

"Yes, but you know Spock."

"But they don't."

They stared tensely at each other for a moment. Then Kirk shook his head and sighed. "Damn; if only we knew what he'd actually said. But the Chamberlain wouldn't commit himself."

"Anyone calling himself 'the All High Melson' would probably take offence if he simply raised his eyebrow a little too far," remarked McCoy.

"I think Melson is his name, actually, not part of his title... Anyway, it doesn't matter. The question is, what do I do? I'll have to see this Melson, and try and apologise, although I don't know what I'm apologising for. We've got to get that treaty settled before the Klingons get a toe-hold here. And besides," he frowned, "I'm worried about what they might do to Spock. Some of these backwater places have the strangest ideas of clemency."

"Clemency?"

"Yes. Apparently to insult His Eminence is a capital offence for a native, but since we're visitors, he's prepared to be merciful."

"Big of him," grunted McCoy. "How merciful?"

"That we don't know. He's deciding now. And I'm on my way to see if I can influence his decision at all."

He rose, and with a parting nod to the doctor, left for the transporter room.

For as long as he could remember, Surak had been his mentor and his ideal. As a child, he had been apt to confuse the image of the philosopher in his mind with that of his father, and indeed he had come to regard the long dead Surak with something of the devotion normally reserved for a father. The man had been the ultimate Vulcan - cool, logical, infinitely peaceful. He was everything Spock longed to be, everything that remained elusively beyond his grasp.

Meeting him on Excalbia had been a shock, and Spock knew he had shown it. But...Surak! Reason said it was impossible, yet there he was, a living, breathing entity. And Spock found himself wanting to believe it; to ignore the stern voice of logic telling him 'It is an illusion'.

He had felt an impulsive desire to go to the man, and say 'Here I am, Spock, your most unworthy disciple. Show me the way, for truly I am lost.'

It was over in a second. He had recovered himself quickly, through force of habit. There were more immediate matters than personal salvation to attend to here.

But when the Surak-image had 'died', he had felt an irrational sense of loss. Impossible to mourn the death of one who had been dead for centuries, so that

wasn't it. No; it was as though a door had opened, only to close again in his face.

Next time, if there was a next time, would he have the courage to step through?

"I assure you, Captain Kirk, it is neither my inclination nor desire to see the man punished at all," said the All High Melson, rather unconvincingly, Kirk thought. "However, there are conventions, you know. One can't allow a breach of this kind to go unreprimated simply because the transgressor happens not to be indigenous to this country. Think of the effect it would have on the natives!"

His Eminence was a man proud of his extensive vocabulary, and determined to display as much of it as possible during his brief interview with Kirk. He was also a man of huge vanity, and a stickler for protocol. Kirk had already made the mistake of calling him 'sir', and had been treated to a frosty glare as a result. Nothing less than 'Your Eminence' would do from a mere Starship Captain, he discovered.

He sighed and tried a different approach. "I'm sure you are aware, Your Eminence, that the Klingons have designs on your mines."

"Ah yes, the Klingons. An interesting species. Totally devoid of all finer feelings."

"Quite. Not at all the sort of people you would care to have running around your countryside."

"Oh, I don't know, you know. It might be rather amusing. Of course, we'd have to limit their numbers. Every year we could round them up and shoot off the excess." He waited for Kirk to smile at his little pleasantry, and then continued. "No, my dear Kirk, you needn't worry about that. I have absolutely no intention of handing the mining rights to the Klingons. They are, as you say, not the sort one would wish for neighbours. So uncouth."

"On the other hand - " he regarded his fingernails affectedly " - the conduct of your First Officer has raised some doubts in my mind as to the suitability of yourselves, the Federation you represent. He was abominably rude, you know."

Kirk ached to press for details, but knew that to do so at this point would be unwise. The only way to save the treaty, and Spock too, was to grovel - hard.

"Your Eminence, you know that I - that we all - deeply regret what has happened. I am sure Commander Spock feels the same way. His behaviour was not... er... typical of him, I assure you, or of Federation representatives in general. Look on it as a momentary lapse; a deeply unfortunate one, but just a lapse after all. He will of course be severely reprimanded when he returns to the ship. I am sure Your Eminence will not wish this little incident to stand in the way of friendly negotiations between us."

"I certainly do not consider this incident 'little', Captain, not will I permit it to be dismissed so easily. Why, in former years, we have declared war for less. However, that is neither here nor there."

"With regard to this treaty, we have received a very attractive offer from the Romulans. I've never met any myself, but I have heard very flattering reports of them. They resemble Vulcans in appearance, I understand; it's lucky I'm not a prejudiced man, for if I were, that would decidedly not be a point in their favour at this moment." He smiled a predatory smile.

Kirk swallowed. "Your Eminence, you have been sadly misinformed, I fear," he said. "The Romulans' appearance is their best point. Underneath, they're almost as bad as the Klingons. Believe me, I've met them, and I know."

"Are they really, now? But you know, my informants tell me they're oh, so sophisticated. A cultured, colourful people. They wouldn't, for example, while staying in a certain country, insult the ruler of that country to his face."

"Your Eminence, must we go over that again? It has no bearing - "

"Really, Captain, I resent intensely your efforts to minimise and gloss over this affair. It smacks of discourtesy, and I must warn you that I do not tolerate insolence."

Seeing the mines slipping away, Kirk became desperate. "Your Eminence... forgive me. I spoke in haste. It is merely that the tanium mines in your country are so valuable, and we are anxious that they should not fall into unscrupulous hands. In my efforts to protect your assets, perhaps I forget the proprieties. Believe me, I don't mean to sound rude. I really have your own interests at heart."

Slightly mollified, the All High replied, "That may be so, but your First Officer can hardly claim such an excuse."

"I admit he was entirely to blame, and as I said, he will be punished for it - "

"Indeed he will. I will see to that."

Conscious that he was probably throwing Spock to the wolves, Kirk merely inclined his head before continuing. "I beg of Your Eminence, don't let one man's churlishness stand in the way of your national security. There are great things at stake here." He held his breath as he waited for the reply.

Finally, after a long pause, it came. "Your earnestness convinces me, Captain. We will meet tomorrow, as formerly arranged, to finalise the agreement."

Kirk subsided with relief; but there was one more thing. "And Mr. Spock?"

"He will be dealt with," came the curt reply.

Zarabeth...the very name never failed to warm him. Lying here, in the cold dark cell, it was easy to pretend he was back on Sarpeidon; that the cell was a cave; that the floor he was lying on was bare rock; that she was here, beside him; he had only to reach out and touch her...

He did not reach out. He opened his eyes and sat up, composing his mind for meditation. But the necessary tranquillity did not come.

Zarabeth, Droxine - yes, and Leila too, though that was some time ago - they had all made a mockery of his carefully constructed Vulcan defences. True, in two cases there had been what Spock chose to call 'extenuating circumstances'. But he had been disturbed, nonetheless. It was wrong to be so vulnerable, it had to be.

Into his mind came an analogy, one that had troubled him before. In Kirk he had found a rock, and he had anchored himself gladly. But the sea was rough, and there were other rocks, more treacherous. They had already holed him several times. Would they finally wreck him completely?

He moved uncomfortably; a Vulcan had no business thinking such things.

"There was no other way, Bones! No other way. I'm sure the man's mad, but he's all we've got to deal with. I did my best."

"Well, all I can say is, you're losing your touch," grumbled McCoy. "Time was you could have settled this deal and had Spock out of there before we'd accomplished orbit."

"Time was," retorted Kirk, "Spock wouldn't have dreamed of landing himself in jail in the first place, so I wouldn't have had to get him out, and you would have laughed yourself silly at the very idea. We must all be getting old."

He left McCoy and headed for his quarters. Getting old? Hell, he wasn't forty!

"So why do I feel ninety?" he muttered savagely to himself. He rubbed the back of his neck wearily. "It's been a long five years. I'm damn glad it's nearly over."

And what then? Promotion certainly; transfer from active service probably. He'd always said he would never accept a desk job, but right now it really didn't seem to matter. To sit at a desk, pushing paper; no red alerts, no ion storms, no jumped-up petty dictators to charm - yes, it had a certain attraction. Funny he hadn't seen it before.

'Forget, forget...'

What a foolish piece of bravado that had been! What had he been trying to prove, and to whom? Or was it jealousy? Jealousy of Reena Kapec who had touched Kirk so deeply... Was that what had motivated him to erase all memory of her from Kirk's mind?

No, no! He wouldn't believe it. Jealousy was an emotion, and a base one at that. And she had been an android, not even a living being. Absurd!

So why had he done it? To prove McCoy wrong?

'You'll never know,' the doctor had said, 'the things love can drive a man to - the ecstasies, the miseries, the broken rules, the desperate chances, the glorious failures, and the glorious victories.'

Well, was he so very wrong?

Could he, a Vulcan, ever know these things? Perhaps not, but he had wanted to. At that moment he had wanted to, and he had resented the doctor's words. So he had locked the door after McCoy, and he had broken the rules and taken a desperate chance.

But the victory had not been very glorious. No-one had known what he had done, not even Kirk himself. Spock remembered his eyes after Edith, after Miramanee, and even now he did not regret what he had done; and yet...had it been, ultimately, a wise step to take? Nothing was going to stop Kirk falling in love, over and over again, and being hurt too. It was simply his nature, and he had the strength and resilience to come through every time - unaided. He would have got over Reena as he had got over Edith and Miramanee and every other female who had held his heart, through time and space.

And he, Spock, had, by this action, betrayed himself again.

Kirk signed his name with a flourish, and it was done. Now, barring treachery, the precious tanium mines were safe from Klingons, Romulans and loose-tongued Vulcans. He had done his duty.

Accepting a celebratory drink, he inquired as to what decision the All High had reached regarding Spock.

"None as yet, to be honest. I haven't given the wretched man a thought. Let's see now...mmm, this Sabab is delicious, is it not? Yes, I had thought of several possibilities, but unfortunately they would all leave him at least partially disfigured, and I rather fancy you wouldn't care for that."

Kirk finished choking on his drink and nodded vigorously. "Yes, Starfleet likes its people to be more or less whole."

"Pity. Ah well that really only leaves flogging then, doesn't it?"

"Flogging..."

"Yes."

Kirk felt the knots gather in his stomach. "Your Eminence, I entreat you to reconsider. Is it really consistent with the treaty we have just signed, and the cordial new relationship between our peoples, to proceed with this sentence? Your clemency and magnanimity are renowned," he continued, lying through his teeth. "Could you not set an example of mercy and...and..."

He was saved from a lame ending by an indignant Melson. "My dear man, are you asking me to let him go - unpunished?"

"Well...yes."

"Absolutely out of the question! Do you realise what such an action would signify? Weakness. And let me tell you, Captain, there are those who would like to take my place, and who are constantly on the alert for such signs. I wouldn't last long if I indulged all my foolish whims, believe me."

"But, Your Eminence, look at it from another point of view. Think how it would increase your popularity and standing among the people if you were to exercise clemency now. It could only enhance your reputation here and throughout the...er...galaxy."

"You think so?"

The All High looked as doubtful as Kirk felt, but not for the same reason. "But there are principles involved, you know. One can't just abandon one's principles..."

"And you are a man of principle, of course. Everyone knows it. And precisely because everyone knows it, no-one would mistake an act of mercy for an act of weakness. On the contrary, they would interpret it as an indication of strength, because it would be clear to all that you can afford to be beneficent."

Melson was obviously wavering, and Kirk would not tell whether he would go for personal satisfaction or an ego-trip.

Finally he nodded. "I will consider your words, Captain."

It would mean leaving Kirk, of course. Oh, he would understand; he always did. But it would be hard; very hard.

And yet he was convinced it was the only way. After that appalling display in front of the - what did he call himself? - All High Melson, no other course remained. At the conclusion of their mission, he would resign from Starfleet and return to Vulcan, there to submit to the Kohlinar.

Only in this way could he resume the true path of his life, and reach his ultimate goal. But he was nonetheless conscious of a certain irony in his decision. Many years ago, he had joined Starfleet convinced that his answer lay among the stars, and not on Vulcan. Now his conviction was exactly reversed.

The scene in the factory came once more into his mind. He would never forget it, of that he was certain; but perhaps one day, through the Kohlinar, he would be able to expunge the shame and disgust he now felt at the memory.

The ridiculous little man had descended on the factory and interrupted Spock's tour to speak to him.

"So you're a Vulcan," he had begun, abruptly and without ceremony. "I've never seen a real live Vulcan before. My wife tells me you mate every seven years. Is that so?"

"No, sir. I've not met the lady."

Aghast, Spock heard the words slip out, and for a second he had refused to believe that he himself had spoken them. That he, a Vulcan of good family, should so debase himself, was surely inconceivable.

Melson had stared at him through the terrible silence that followed, and Spock had prayed that he would laugh, although he felt more like dying himself.

Then came the curt command. "Arrest him." He had turned on his heel and left, and Spock could hardly blame him.

What, what, what had provoked him to make such an insane remark? He was prone to unexpected flashes of humour, he knew, but this was sheer madness. He remembered a time, not so long ago, when, hearing the same exchange between two others, he would not have understood the remark. What could have brought about this disastrous fall from grace? Surely not proximity to Kirk? The Captain

had a distinct penchant for crude humour at times, but he was not foul-mouthed. And Spock's own rudimentary wit had developed along quite different, drier lines. Something as gross as this was quite out of character.

Before he could recover from the shock, he had been taken out of the building and deposited in a waiting vehicle which had sped through the streets at a nightmare pace before stopping at the jail where he now reclined. Curiously, he felt a certain peace steal over him. After the spiritual turmoil of the last few hours, a definite decision about his future was something to clutch at with relief. Indeed, he felt more satisfied - he would put it no stronger - than he had done for months. All the doubts and uncertainties that had been building up, and which he had been ignoring so studiously, they would all be resolved. The Kohlinar would settle everything.

He felt reasonably certain they would not execute him - that would be the ultimate irony, to be struck down as he was about to step through the door at last. Whatever they did do to him, he would accept it meekly. It would be no more than he deserved, and a lot less than he would suffer on the plateau of Gol.

Kirk would no doubt angle desperately for his release (this thought came quite dispassionately). He was unlikely to be successful; there was still the treaty to consider, so he would be unable to push too hard for favours. Spock felt a twinge of something like pity as he pictured Kirk's frustration and concern. How could he let him know that it was all right, that whatever happened to him now was of no consequence?

The door opened. It was time. Indeed, he had expected them long before now.

"On your feet, prisoner," said the guard. "You're to be cleaned up. We must be looking our best for the Grand Pardoning Ceremony, mustn't we?"

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So these are an Admiral's quarters. Hmm, not bad, not bad. Bed half as wide again as a Captain's, and - hey! A full-length mirror! Wow, look at me! This uniform's really great; all that gold braid. Feels kinda conspicuous - I can see it out of the corner of my eye when I move my arms. Ah well no doubt I'll get used to it. I've got a hell of a lot to get used to. No landing parties, no diplomatic missions, no hostile aliens...no Enterprise. No Spock.

What's this... A window! With a view! That's the sky up there. At night I'll be able to see the stars...you can't see Vulcan's sun from Earth.

I wonder how he is. He seemed so sure, so convinced. I wish I could feel the same way. Still, it's his life and his right to do with it what he pleases. So why do I feel I should have tried to talk him out of it? He wouldn't have listened. His mind was already made up, that was obvious. I wish I knew what had brought it on. Something happened to him on that damned planet, I'm sure.

I'm going to miss him, but hell; we both knew it would happen one day. I guess I just didn't expect it to be so...so complete. Irrevocable. Here I am on Earth, and he's on Vulcan, and there's no prospect of us ever meeting again. It seems wrong, somehow. We should be together. We belong together...

What the hell am I talking about? How can I forget the look on his face when he left? He was serene, almost other-worldly. I wonder what I looked like. In a way, I almost envy him; and then again, I pity him. All his life he's been searching, striving to fulfil some nameless need. I thought perhaps that I... that the Enterprise... I'm sure he was happy. He was happy! We all were. But perhaps it wasn't happiness he needed. Does he now know what he needs, and is the Kohlinar the only way to attain it?

I can only hope so.

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DEVIL'S ADVOCATES by Meg Wright

"Captain!" Uhura swung round in her chair. "I'm getting a distress call from Fomalhaut 3."

"Details?"

"None as yet. Just a standard subspace call."

"Fomalhaut 3," Kirk mused. "Anyone know anything about it?"

Spock turned from the library computer. "It is a colonised planet, Captain, inhabited solely by an old Earth sect called the Amish. They have a doctrine of non-resistance and a culture based on German nineteenth century customs. They emigrated to Old America to escape persecution, and later, with the coming of the warp drive, to Fomalhaut 3, which they call Mennon. They speak a language based on Palatine German and English which was commonly known as Pennsylvanian Dutch."

Although Kirk had not yet known his First Officer for long, he had already learned not to show surprise at the Vulcan's formidable talent for providing instant information - lectures, McCoy called them. He nodded his thanks.

"Plot a course for Fomalhaut 3, Mr. Bailey; we'll go and see what they want," he said.

As they came within normal radio range, Uhura picked up the signal once more.

"Put him on the screen, Lieutenant."

"I can't, Captain, he refuses further contact. His message reads, 'Unknown fever outbreak, medical assistance required immediately. Landing co-ordinates 268 325 976.' That's all, sir."

Kirk looked across at the library computer. "We'll beam down with Dr. McCoy. Mr. Bailey, you have the con."

They found themselves outside a crude log hut among gently rolling hills. Sheep cropped the short grass; a peaceful, idyllic scene. The hut door swung open; Kirk lost interest in scenery. The man wore the dark grey knee breeches and wideawake hat of a seventeenth century Puritan, but his most noticeable feature was the full flowing, gleaming red beard that curled riotously down his chest.

"I thank you for coming to our aid," he told them. "I am Ahab. I fear our leader will not be pleased when he hears what I have done, for I am breaking our laws in seeking your help, but my wife is growing feebler and my sister risks her life among the sick and dying. And while the Klingons maintain control we can do little for them."

"Klingons!" Kirk said explosively.

Spock and McCoy ranged themselves back to back behind him, phasers in hand, eyes alert for danger.

"Mister, your explanation had better be good. Why were we not warned of the presence of Klingons? We haven't encountered one of their ships."

Ahab shook his head wearily. "There are but seven of them, Captain. Their ship is small and hidden somewhere on the planet. They came a month or so ago. We tried to show them that we simply want to be left in peace. We have no interest in fighting for any cause, but their commander made life intolerable. Then they took some of the women for their pleasure..." His voice broke. "My wife among them." He turned his head aside, fighting for calm. "I could not endure it. Our leader will do nothing; he bids us remember our faith and our submission to suffering. But to watch those you love in agony..." He broke off, covering his face.



Kirk muttered his sympathy; he didn't need to imagine the Klingons' methods of ensuring compliance - he'd seen them too often.

McCoy relaxed his watchfulness a little, and said, over his shoulder, "When did the fever start?"

"Two weeks after they took Rebecca they cast her out, bidding us find a younger, stronger woman to serve their needs." He paused, grim-mouthed. "She would not speak of what she had suffered, but now the fever rages within her and she raves of such bestiality that all who hear her grow sick." He stopped once more. "We no longer hear of what goes on within our meeting house. Those that grow sick are slaughtered and thrown out for us to bury. Even in that they display their cruelty; they do not use their phasers to give them a clean death." He shook his head, shuddering at the recollection. "Now others have taken the sickness from Rebecca and there are many ill. The older ones die swiftly; my wife still lives but grows feebler every day."

"What are the symptoms?" McCoy asked.

"One feels tremendous burning in the limbs and open sores appear between the toes and fingers, which slowly rot away while the body still lives. Death is too slow in coming for those who watch their loved ones suffer."

"Capellan fever," McCoy said. "One of the Klingons must be a carrier. We can deal with it, Jim, but we cannot save the limbs if they are already affected. We'll need to work fast and vaccinate everyone on the planet if it is not to spread. One carrier can infect millions, in time."

"Can we get the doctor to the sick without the Klingons' knowledge?"

Ahab nodded. "They are all in the fever-house; we separated them from their families. It is about a mile to the north-east, well beyond the village. We shall not be seen; the Klingons know they have nothing to fear from us and keep no watch. Their contempt is worst of all." His voice expressed the deep-welling rage within him.

They skirted the sprawling village; the focal point a high-roofed house with a small belfry set at one end..

"Our Meeting House, where we should meet to honour our God," Ahab told them bitterly. "Now it is made unclean by those devils."

Kirk made sure they were not silhouetted against the skyline. There was no point in risking recognition. Since the Klingons always fought first and asked questions afterwards - if there was anyone left to ask - he was keen to avoid direct confrontation for the time being.

They were greeted at the door of the fever house by a grey-clad, red-haired woman whose attempted air of serenity was belied by the mutinous set of her mouth.

"Ahab, you have sought help?" Her eyes swiftly took in the strangers' appearance. "But Micah forbade..."

"I know," Ahab said fiercely. "Micah has told me what I should do, but I cannot suffer the pain of so many others as well as I could mine own agony. I must do something; I cannot sit looking on. Susannah, one of these men is a doctor and can cure our sick. Please take him to them. I will take these others to plead with Micah."

The local leader was a tall, powerful man, with a greying beard as full as all Mennonite males. His speech was slow and gentle...but he remained adamant against Kirk's persuasiveness.

"Captain Kirk, you have been brought here without my knowledge or permission; I would never have given my consent. I shall deal severely with Ahab; the Lord's Will must be obeyed though we suffer here below. I cannot condone any form of violence."

"Even though your women are abused and your men killed?" Kirk asked bluntly.

"Heaven will reward them. My people know that and welcome whatever God holds out for them."

"But surely one has the right to defend oneself against aggression," Spock said quietly. "My people do not take life unnecessarily, but we admit the right to defend one's family and one's planet if they are threatened."

Micah sighed. "We left Earth, Mr. Spock, to avoid just such reasoning as this. The devil can always find an advocate."

"Will you at least give us as much information as you can about these Klingons?" Kirk asked. "How did they get here, and where are they now?"

"I will tell you nothing to further your ungodly ends."

Kirk lost his temper - it didn't show to either peaceful Mennonite or Vulcan. "If we can deal with the Klingons without your having to lift a finger, will that satisfy you?"

"Captain," Spock interrupted, "there are seven Klingons and only two of us. Do you intend to beam down an armed party? If so, we run the risk of war with the Klingon Empire."

"I'm aware of that, Mr. Spock. I think you and I should be able to manage seven of them if we put our minds to it. That is, if it will not offend the Amish if we take unilateral action?"

A slight gleam of hope seemed to appear in Micah's eyes, but he merely professed himself quite ready to ignore them. Their salvation, he implied, was in their own hands; he would not interfere in devil's work.

Outside, Kirk let out a long breath of exasperation. "I don't think I've been considered an emissary of the devil before, have you, Mr. Spock?"

The Vulcan clearly considered the question purely rhetorical.

Back at the fever house they found McCoy ordering supplies of drugs to be beamed down.

"All under control, Bones?"

"Yes. It's not a severe fever if you've got the right drugs to deal with it. Susannah has been a great help; she's a good nurse."

"I'm afraid our news is less cheerful. Micah refuses to help us; we haven't even found out how the Klingons got here. Lt. Uhura reports no sign of any Klingon ship in the vicinity and no unidentifiable radio activity."

"I can tell you a little," Susannah said quietly. "The men will tell you nothing - even my brother would not have sent out the distress call if it had not been for his wife's illness. They are all within the Meeting House, but although that is a considered sacrilege, the men will not lift a finger against them."

"But how did they get here?" Kirk asked. "How long since they arrived?"

"We saw them first a month ago," Susannah said. "There was a roaring and a flame in the sky two nights before we first saw them. There are those who say it was a sign of God's wrath, but it seems to me more probable that it was a scout ship."

"A scout ship." Kirk frowned.

"It could be," said Spock. "But if it is so one would expect them to be using their radio, at least to report back. The Klingon fleet is not generally encouraged to think and act for itself without orders from their High Command."

"We must find it and have a look at it if possible," said Kirk. "It may answer a few questions." He took out his communicator.

"Bridge, Uhura here."

"Lieutenant, sensor scan for a Klingon scout ship on the planet surface and give us an exact location."

It had come down deep in wooded country and was well hidden by trees.

"No life readings," Spock reported. "We should be able to get inside."

"Unless they've set a trap."

"Unlikely, Captain. From their subsequent actions it appears that they knew what to expect from the Amish, and they would believe they had no need to protect themselves."

They worked with caution all the same, but the Vulcan proved to be right and they got inside with no trouble.

"Let's check it out, Mr. Spock."

Half an hour's search produced little of interest, which they had expected. Spock, however, did note something unusual.

"The identity call in the computer has been altered," he reported. "This ship is now declaring itself a Vegan merchant."

"Vegan? To delude the Federation?"

"We would challenge a Vegan as we would a Klingon vessel. It must be to delude their own ships - which is illogical."

Kirk pondered, but couldn't come up with any answers. "Well, Mr. Spock, if we can't achieve anything else, at least we can scuttle this ship and cut off their retreat."

"A logical precaution. Do you wish to destroy it or render it useless to them?"

"You can do that without their knowing it has been tampered with?"

"Yes. I have only to reprogramme the computer."

"Very well, Mr. Spock." If he had had any other First Officer of his acquaintance with him, Kirk would have blown the Klingon ship to smithereens to make sure, but he was beginning to have great faith in Spock. He had never yet known him to speak anything other than the literal truth about his abilities and that was more than any Captain could reasonably expect.

Spock's hands moved deftly about the computer circuits and, in a surprisingly short time, he turned and said, "It is done. To the Klingons it will appear that their circuitry is defective, but they will be unable to locate any faults. In this way we do not give away our presence and may maintain the element of surprise."

"Thank you, Mr. Spock. Beam us up, Scotty."

McCoy was peacefully engaged in making up individual doses of the drugs for Susannah to administer when she came hurrying into the small temporary office.

"Doctor, one of the Klingons is coming. You must hide."

"What is he coming here for? Me?"

"No. They can't know you are here. I know what he wants. Quick, in here." She pushed him into a cupboard holding brooms and other cleaning equipment. "Stay quiet and you will be all right. He mustn't see that uniform."

She shut the wooden door; he set his eye to a crack and watched the Klingon enter the room.

"Susannah, I told you to come to the Meeting House today."

"I shall not come, Kirn," she said steadily. "I told you so."

"I thought you Mennonites always did as you were told," he sneered. "Your sisters, or cousins, or whatever they are, are very co-operative. Why aren't you? I can make you."

"Please leave me alone. I have work to do here. The sick ones need me."

He laughed jeeringly and grabbed her to him; she struggled and he hit her brutally.

McCoy was out of the cupboard. "Let her go!"

The Klingon was incredibly swift. In one movement he thrust the girl from him and drew his phaser. It was lucky for McCoy it was only set on stun, because Kirn had no intention of pausing to check the setting.

He looked down at the unconscious body. "Well, well, a Federation uniform. I think we'll take you both along and ask a few questions."

Spock looked round the small office. "There appears to have been a struggle, Captain, therefore we can assume the Doctor has met the Klingons. It seems likely he has been taken to the Meeting House."

"Then we must get him out again."

"Affirmative, Captain. Have you a plan in mind?"

"Yes, Mr. Spock. We want to get as close as we can without being recognised. We'll go back aboard and see what they can provide for us in the way of clothing and whiskers."

Half an hour later, Kirk was regretting he did not have time to appreciate to the full the awesome spectacle his First Officer presented as he joined him in the transporter room. Night had fallen over the Amish village below, and it was only important that their silhouettes should appear convincing. Kirk did not think the feeble rush-lights the Amish used would be sufficient to betray Spock, but in the brighter light of the transporter room the combination of faintly green skin with a full black beard was almost too much for the gravity of the two technicians present. Spock, however, was quite unconscious of the sensation he caused and his demeanour was customarily calm as he took his station.

A few seconds later they were standing outside the Meeting House.

Kirk looked about him, pondering the best way to get in. He could see no sign of any guard, but that did not mean their arrival had been unobserved. Spock drew him hastily into the shadows as the door opened and a woman came out carrying a stone pitcher. She passed their hiding place and went through the trees to what Kirk realised must be a well. He slipped after her, motioning Spock to follow, and spoke softly.

"Sister! Don't be afraid, we mean you no harm."

She stiffened a little, but relaxed again immediately. "The only evil in this place is back in there. What do you want? Is it possible that some of our menfolk have taken pity on us at last?"

"We intend to help you, yes, but we are not of your people. We are from the U.S.S. Enterprise. Isn't there a watch being kept for us?"

"They have ordered our menfolk to keep a watch for strangers, but they do not understand either our weakness or our strength. Because we remain passive and do not repay violence with violence, they believe that we are sufficiently cowed to obey their commands blindly. The men will not take sides in any

quarrel, not even for our sakes."

"It will soon be over," Kirk told her gently. "The Klingons have captured one of my crew. Is he in there?"

"The doctor. Yes, he is there. They tortured him but he would say nothing but his name. Now they are going to beat Susannah to make him talk."

Kirk looked at the Vulcan. "Bones won't talk even if they hurt the girl, but we've got to save him from making that decision."

"Certainly, Captain, but it would be as well if we can reduce their numbers a little first."

Kirk nodded. "Can you help us, sister?"

"We are desperate," she said evenly. "Our men have abandoned us to such horrors..." She caught her breath and looked away from him. "Tell me what you want."

"Entice at least one Klingon out here. The more the better!"

"Easily. I will be back with one in a moment. Wait here, by the well."

They waited only a short while before they heard voices coming closer.

"So this time it is to be a willing surrender. I shall enjoy that."

"My own man does not care to fight for me, so I may as well belong to you."

The two figures merged in the darkness; Spock slipped silently from Kirk's side and the next instant the Klingon crumpled without a sound and was dragged into the undergrowth. Kirk looked from Spock to the limp figure and back again.

"That was remarkably quiet, Mr. Spock. What did you do?"

Spock raised his eyebrows infinitesimally. "The nervous systems of both Klingons and Humans are extraordinarily vulnerable," he said. "I merely pinched him on the neck."

"Most effective."

The woman joined them. "I have arranged with Dorothea that she will bring two Klingons out to look for him. Be ready."

Again they did not have long to wait before they heard voices.

"Karstan has not come back, you say? Did he come out alone?"

"No, Sarah was with him - the woman you wanted for your own, Kaan. I think they may have gone amongst the trees somewhere."

"The others can deal with the Federation spy," Kaan growled. "Kastan will find more among the trees than he bargained for. Follow me, Katar."

Once more a dark figure slipped from the shadow and one Klingon fell heavily to the ground. Kirk was on the other a split second later. They bound the pair tightly with rope from the well.

"Pity we daren't risk phasers inside the house," Kirk said regretfully. "Still, only four to go now."

"Most satisfactory," Spock agreed.

Inside, the House was dim with smoke from the cooking fire. Around it was a general movement and murmur among the women as they prepared the evening meal; at the far end of the long room there was stillness.

McCoy was tied fast to one of the wooden pillars supporting the roof, his uniform torn and bloody, his body marked with gashes. His breathing was uneven and his eyes dull; blood trickled slowly from one corner of his mouth.

"Will you talk yet, or must I order some new entertainment for us all?"

McCoy shook his head wearily; the Klingon looked at him with disgust.

"You'd like us to make a martyr of you, wouldn't you," the Klingon sneered. "Well, we'll see what treating the woman who hid you will do. Bring her here."

Two other Klingons dragged Susannah forward. She shook off their hands and stood defiantly. McCoy raised his eyes to hers and shook his head, his face grey with the knowledge of what she must suffer.

Kirk touched Spock on the arm and pointed. "You go round that side, I'll go this. Attack when I do."

Unobtrusively they made their way up the room. As the Klingon raised his arm Kirk sprang, kicking his wrist, simultaneously chopping at another Klingon's throat. Spock cut the ropes that bound McCoy and felled a third with a gentle neck pinch. The Amish men stood silently and watched, but several of the women hampered the Klingons by holding their arms, oblivious of bruises.

McCoy looked from Kirk to Spock and closed his eyes. "It's a nightmare," he said faintly. "That matting doesn't do a thing for either of you two beauties."

Kirk grinned and took out his communicator. "Kirk to Enterprise. Stand by, we have seven prisoners to beam up."

"I'm glad to hear you, Captain," Uhura replied. "We have a Klingon police ship in our sights, but they're starting to get impatient with us."

Kirk interviewed the Klingon Police Chief in the briefing room. "I'm sorry you have been kept waiting," he said politely, "but I was detained by a little matter of business. May I enquire what you are doing in this sector? This is not Klingon space."

"We know, Captain, and we have shown our authorisation from your Federation. Your ship locked a tractor beam on us and is preventing us from carrying out our duties. Please command your crew to let us beam down to Mennon at once."

"Why?"

"We believe that a scout ship of ours has landed there. We want the men on board."

"Who are they?"

"Escaped convicts. They stole a ship to make their getaway, and we have traced their destination to this planet. The Federation told us that your colony there will not defend itself, and we think these men may try to become masters of the whole planet. They are dangerous men, Captain Kirk. If left alone they would be a danger to the Klingons as well as to the Federation. They were awaiting execution for the attempted murder of our Emperor."

"I see." Kirk cut in the viewscreen to the brig. When the Klingon saw the seven men, he smiled a cold, hard smile.

"Was this your little matter of business, Captain? If so, you have my gratitude."

Gratitude was the last think Kirk had ever expected to receive from a Klingon.

"Well, Mr. Spock," said Kirk when he had put his First Officer in the picture, "that explains why the scout ship was using a Vegan call sign."

Spock frowned. "Constant association with the illogicality of Human thinking must be affecting me adversely."

"Oh, surely not," said Kirk, straight-faced. "Ah, Bones, is everything under control down there?"

"The patients are," said McCoy with a glint in his eyes, "but I'm not so sure about the nurses. I think there are slight signs of revolt among the women."

"Yes," Kirk agreed. "I had a feeling that some of them would find it difficult to forgive their menfolk. But apart from that, everything's done?"

"Yes. We've beamed down a medical team to carry on. There's nothing else to keep us here."

"Very well, Bones. Now you are to go below and get some sleep. That's an order."

As the doors hissed shut, he turned to Spock. "Thank you, Mr. Spock, you have been invaluable."

Spock raised his eyebrows. "There is no need to thank me, Captain, I was merely carrying out my duties."

"I am afraid, Mr. Spock, that gratitude is an earth-weakness of mine, which you will have to learn to live with. Carry on."

As Spock left the room, Kirk wondered whether his retreating back looked more relaxed than usual, but decided he was probably mistaken.

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ZINE ADS

March 1981

CAPTIVES - Kirk is captured by Orions and sold as a pleasure slave. Marginally K/S, an age statement (over 18) is needed. Diana King, 4901 Montgomery Street, Annandale, VA 22003, U.S.A.

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